(Re)mixing 'school spirit': spectacular youth subcultures as resistance to cultures of control

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Dedication:

To my son, "Heaven Lee," his friends, and classmates who wear low-slung waistlines every day
to express possibilities of Black Diasporic unity and resistance against cultures of control.

To my father, Doug Semark, for nurturing my revolutionary spirit
and encouraging me to always question what is thought to be known.

Acknowledgements:

This thesis project was a discovery of self that was made possible by the love, support, guidance, and dissent of many people, including family, friends, coworkers, classmates, fellow parents, and high school students. Throughout this journey I have been stretched, both personally and professionally, as a White woman, a mother, an employee of a U.S. public school, and a communications scholar.

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Acknowledgements must be given to the many champions of racial equity in education who came before me and walk alongside me today. I honor their efforts to disrupt and (re)mix ideological systems that harm young people, specifically youth of color. I am energized by the equity work that is occurring at ETHS, and thank the young people, parents, community leaders, and residents of Evanston, Illinois, who have joined in the critical and necessarily uncomfortable discussions on race and racism.

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Most importantly, I must honor my son, his friends and classmates whose Black Diasporic stylistic ventures inspired this project. I thank them for questioning the institutional practices that seek to police and contain them, and for questioning my role in enforcing these practices. I remain in awe of their resilience and day-to-day acts of resistance. It is through their subcultural fashion 'noise' that I have been able to hear young peoples' solutions to the contradictions of hegemony.

Abstract:

(Re)mixing 'school spirit': spectacular youth subcultures
as resistance to cultures of control

By

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DePaul University, 2014

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This project examines the way in which the U.S. nation-state works through cultural institutions such as schools and the media to create ideological cultures of control. A main argument of this project is that control cultures (re)produce an essentialist framework of an "All-American" dominant culture rooted in the ideology of whiteness through which youth identity – and to a larger extent, American national identity – is to be conceptualized and created. Cultural analysis is used to show how the articulation of dominant ideology works through discursive formations to shape the racial identities and regulate the bodies of students, parents, and educators. Subculture is presented as a site where young people of color can resist the regulation of their bodies and imposed conceptions of self. This project argues that spectacular youth subcultures present Black Diasporic youths – as well as the adults who observe them –with possibilities for unity, stylistic expression (such as 'sagging pants' style) and identity formation that can resist, refuse and even (re)mix school cultures of control.

Keywords: youth identity; school; public education; cultures of control; moral panics; race; racism; whiteness; policing of blackness; resistance; Black Diaspora; spectacular subcultural style; sagging

Chapter 1: Introduction

For the past four years I have worked as the communications director at Evanston Township High School (ETHS), the only public high school in the Chicago suburb of Evanston, Illinois. During this time I have had the unique experience of working with young people, their families, and the nearly 600 teachers and staff members employed by this one-school district. I arrived at ETHS in June 2010 from a corporate communications background, ready to "make a difference" in what I assumed to be the grassroots world of school communications. When I was hired, my knowledge of working with youth in general and in educational institutions in particular was limited to a specific gendered and racialized client perspective - as a White female student, as a parent of an adolescent Black[1] male student, and as a graduate student when I began working in this position. Unlike my experience in "corporate America" where the bottom line is profit, I believed that the *bottom line* of a public high school would be to ensure the well-being and 'success' of every teenager in that school building. From this common-sense[2] perspective, the notion of free schooling constructed a mental framework that positioned public schools in the U.S. – particularly those in affluent and liberal-minded communities such as Evanston – as innovative learning communities. I imagined these communities to be abundant with resources and structured to (re)create spectacular learning experiences for <u>all</u> peoples. My own elementary and secondary education experience was situated in a poor, conservative, rural school district in

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[1] My son is biracial (Black and White) and self-identifies as a Black male. He was in 8th grade at a local middle school when I began working at the high school, and, during the timeframe of this project, is a third year student at ETHS.

[2] Errol Lawrence provides a helpful explanation of "common sense" thinking in his chapter, "Just plain common sense: the 'roots' of racism." He explains: "the term 'common sense' is generally used to denote a down-to-earth 'good sense'. It is thought to represent the distilled truths of centuries of practical experience; so much so that to say of an idea or practice that it is only common sense, is to appeal over the logic and argumentation of intellectuals to what all reasonable people know in their 'heart of hearts' to be right and proper. Such an appeal can act at one and the same time to foreclose any discussion about certain ideas and practices and to legitimate them" (46-47). Lawrence references Gramsci, one of the first scholars to deconstruct the concept of common sense, and his argument that common-sense thinking is strangely composite: "it contains elements from the Stone Age and principles of a more advanced science, prejudices from all past phases of history at the local level and intuitions of a future philosophy which will be that of the human race united the world over" (46-47). Thus, "common sense" is a particular ideology that has been normalized and naturalized in popular thought.

the Midwest that had limited resources and one general curricular track. I imagined that, with the privilege of adequate funding, unlimited material resources, and liberal votes, the *possibilities* of public education would be abundant and the barriers would be few. In addition, I naively assumed that every employee who worked in a school setting – teachers, classroom aides, safety officers, social workers, janitors, administrators, etc. – genuinely *liked* young people and were interested in supporting their hopes and dreams by any means necessary. In this sense, my initial vision of producing 'grassroots' communications in a high school setting was framed around a construction of common-sense ideologies. Through this perspective I "drank the school Kool-Aid," if you will, and fully trusted that the policies and practices I would deploy and the messages I would communicate were constructed in the best interests of *every* student – past, present, or future.

During my first year as a "school agent"[3] I diligently spent every 42 minutes in the hallway outside of my office to establish a positive adult presence, and, after a decade of working in a mundane corporate culture in downtown Chicago, I was thrilled to be in a space where I could interact with young people. This ritual was, on the one hand, an attempt to connect with the students in my hallway, and admittedly, it also fulfilled the directive given by several administrators to be present and provide surveillance of student passage through this typically unmonitored social space.

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[3] For the purpose of this paper I refer to all employees of the school – including teachers, school aides, operations staff, administration, directors, security guards – as "school agents." While socially constructed *positional* hierarchies define levels of power among adults, these job titles and levels of authority are not always visible or even logical to young people. My experience in schools tells me that the construct of a *generational* hierarchy ("adult" vs. "youth", "seniors" vs. "freshmen") is more popularly used to define structures of power that situate young people as subordinates. In the context of schools, students are made aware via institutional discourse as well as by written rules in student handbooks that all adult employees holds some sort of repressive power simply because of their positionality as adults. For example, school policy at ETHS provides all staff members with the authority to ask a student for her/his identification for any reason and at any time. If the student refuses to present her/his ID, the staff member can refer the student to the deans' office for "defiance of authority." In addition to policing student movement, students are mostly conscious of the fact that school employees police student modes of expression, particularly those that are not aligned with the mission, vision and goals of the school district. Thus, school staff are positioned as agents of "production, exploitation and repression" (Althusser 133) to advance the hegemonic culture of the particular institution and, to a larger extent, the capitalist nation-state.

My hallway was a site for ongoing social interactions and performances: youth actors from

the fifty four[4] countries represented at the high school profiled their unique styles, spoke many

tongues and dialects, and displayed an apparent comfort among the quintessential 'Evanston

diversity' that I had heard about and was so eager to encounter. In this hallway I observed many

things about the contemporary teenager: the bold fashion selections, the casual cursing mixed

with ever-evolving and elusive slang, the disruption of space via mobile devices and wireless

technology as well as the specific gendered, raced, and classed performance of identity. My

interactions with students in the hallway during this time were driven by the official rules of the

student handbook, my informal observations of school culture, and the unofficial but widely-

accepted word of mouth advice from colleagues: "tell *them* to take their hats off and pull up their

(sagging) pants," "make sure *they* have a hall pass," "don't let *them* linger when the warning bell

rings," "don't let *them* curse around you," "watch out for *those* 'frequent flyers'."[5] I listened to

the cautionary tales about *those*[6] menaces and their deviant hallway behaviors and believed that

any apathy on my part would inevitably lead to mass mayhem. I screened the students who

passed by like an airport security agent, searching for deviant fashion styles (as outlined in the

student handbook) such as baseball caps or sagged pants, listening for foul language, and looking

for hall passes to mark legitimate passage. Through a lens of whiteness[7] I had convinced myself

that my *positive* "pre-screening" efforts would remind *those* students of the rules, encourage

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[4] Source: http://www.eths.k12.il.us/about/.

[5] The term 'frequent flyers' is a casual term used among school agents to refer to students who are seen walking the halls frequently when classes are in session. The presumption is that these are students who repeatedly ditch class. The term has also been used to signify students who frequently disobey school rules. For example, a student who is referred to the Deans' Office regularly for any given infraction might be called a 'frequent flyer'. Similarly, a student who is usually found 'breaking' a particular school rule on a routine basis, such as wearing a baseball cap in the hallways, might be considered a frequent flyer in that sense. Publically reported suspension and detention data suggest that students of color, in general, and male students, in particular, are most often disciplined for being 'frequent flyers' in some context.

[6] The use of "they", "those" and "them" is intentional here, as it represents the coded "Othering" that occurs among school personnel.

[7] Here I refer to Audrey Thompson's definition of "whiteness": "Whiteness theory treats whiteness not as a biological category but as a social construction. Insofar as whiteness is thought of as "natural," it is understood in essentialized terms — either as a personal attribute or as a scientific category. Yet who counts as white depends on what is at stake. CRT scholar Cheryl Harris suggests that whiteness is best thought of as a form of property. Conceived of as legal or cultural property, whiteness can be seen to provide material and symbolic privilege to whites, those passing as white, and sometimes honorary whites. Examples of material privilege would include better access to higher education or a choice of safe neighborhoods in which to live; symbolic white privilege includes conceptions of beauty or intelligence that not only are tied to whiteness but that implicitly exclude blackness or brownness" (Thompson).

them to comply, and help them avoid *negative* interactions with more unforgiving adults further down the hall.

I am embarrassed now to think about my interactions with students during those first few months on the job. Within six months my hallway had an established culture of expectations: students, mostly Black and Brown[8] males, would preemptively remove their hats, adjust their sagged waistlines, or silence their voices as they rounded the corner near my office door. I had 'successfully' fulfilled my institutional duty by policing (mostly) bodies of color and silencing their voices, believing that I was on *their* side, one of the *more forgiving* adults. Our collective experiences in the hallway outside my office motivated my research interests and bolstered my own personal journey to reflect on my cultural practices and beliefs as a White woman in general, and more specifically, as a White mother of a young man of color who would soon be attending this same high school and be policed by these same rules. Soon I began to see how the articulation of dominant ideology actually worked *through* these institutional policies, practices, and messages to suppress critical thought of *specific* students, parents, and school agents and reinforce racial and classed hierarchies. What I had not anticipated or considered was how this policing of bodies and discourses – and the students' *responses* to and *resistance* of this policing – would become the impetus for this project and help shape a new critical framework for my professional life. I am grateful to the many young people who questioned the politics behind these institutional practices and my role in enforcing them.

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[8] The words "Latina/o," "Latin@" and "Black" will be used interchangeably with "Black Diasporic" throughout this paper to isolate a race(d) representation that is conceptualized by Lillian Jiménez (199) as a "new *mestizaje*", or a shared human panethnic and Black Diasporic experience that is complex, beautiful and insightful. In addition, I will refer to young people situated within this conceptualization as "youth under the umbrella of blackness" and "young people of color."

Goal of this research

Through my work in school communications I have observed how public education in the

U.S. functions as a mechanism of the capitalist state. Specifically, my experience has revealed

the way in which neoliberal[9] logic is perpetuated in popular discourses on education through

themes of global competitiveness, school safety, and student achievement as noted by the so-

called 'achievement'[10] gap. From these discourses, I realized, a *crisis* about education had

emerged, mobilized by moral panics that situate youths of color, their families, and their

communities as the source of deviancy and deprivation. These moral panics are used to

legitimize the disproportionate monitoring, policing, and criminalization of bodies of color that

occurs in schools. The result is a school culture of control, which is used for what Stuart Hall and

his colleagues refer to as a "*racially specific* mechanism" (340) of the capitalist state. These

cultures of control in schools as mechanisms of the state[11] create and recreate what Antonio

Gramsi specified as exercises of power through "*coercion* (domination) and *consent* (direction)"

(Hall et al. 203) to reinforce racial and classed hierarchies among youth. Control cultures in U.S.

schools (re)produce an essentialist framework of an "All-American" dominant culture rooted in

the ideology of whiteness through which youth identity – and to a larger extent, American

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[9] David Harvey defines "neoliberalism" as "a theory of political economic practices that propose that human well-being can be best advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade. The role of the state is to create and preserve an institutional framework appropriate to such practices" (2).

[10] According to Gloria Ladson-Billings, "the 'achievement gap' is one of the most talked-about issues in U.S. education" (3). She explains that the term "refers to the disparities in standardized test scores between Black and White, Latina/o and White, and recent immigrant and White students" (3). I acknowledge and have witnessed how significant disparities – "gaps" – exist between the educational experiences of student of color and white students. However, by signifying 'achievement' of students as an alleged cause, and therefore not the *actual* cause, I'm agreeing with Ladson-Billings' call to "question the wisdom of focusing on the achievement gap as a way of explaining and understanding the persistent inequality that exists (and has always existed) in our nation's schools" (3). In this paper I will discuss how inequities in education are produced by systemic mechanisms mobilized through institutions of the state that exist *beyond* the realm of individual level of achievement. Ladson-Billings (3) argues and I agree that educators need to move their focus beyond the notion of an 'Achievement Gap' in order to develop strategies to address the historical underlying issues of inequity in education. (Ladson-Billings "Education Debt").

[11] Here, I am referring specifically to the United States, the nation, as the state. Louis Althusser references the Marxist-Leninist theory of the State to define "the State as a force of repressive execution and intervention 'in the interests of the ruling classes' in the class struggle conducted by the bourgeoisie and its allies against the proletariat…" (137). He clarifies that "the State (and its existence in its apparatus) has no meaning except as a function of *State power*. The whole of the political class struggle revolves around the State" (140). He explains that while possession (i.e., seizure and conservation) of State *power* is the objective of class struggles, the State – in its existence as an apparatus – "may survive political events which affect the possession of State power" (140). Althusser (142) theorizes that in order to advance the theory of the State, there must be consideration for not only the distinction between State power and the repressive State apparatus, but also another reality that is conceptualized as the ideological State apparatuses (a concept that will be explained later in this paper).

national identity – is to be conceptualized and created. What I aim to explore in this thesis is the way in which the nation-state works *through* cultural institutions such as schools and the media to discipline and suppress the cultural and racial identities of young people of color. I argue that spectacular youth subcultures, such as those revealed to me in the hallways of ETHS, present Black Diasporic youths – as well as the adults who observe them – with new *possibilities* for stylistic expression and identity formation that can resist, refuse and even (re)mix these cultures of control.

Previous studies have revealed powerful insights about the impact of race and racism in education through a lens of critical race theory, but few scholars have explored this topic through a cultural studies lens and in the larger context of communication studies. Using a cultural studies framework, I build on these critical theories and educational research to examine the shaping of control cultures in U.S. public schools, stretching beyond the events and experiences themselves. In doing so, I establish what Lawrence Grossberg calls a "new locus of relationality" (23) that considers both *radical contextuality* and *conjuncture* situated against the complex context of a larger hegemonic struggle ("Cultural Studies" 13). To examine the intersections of race, education, and cultures of control, I draw on the work of cultural studies and critical education scholars to provide a framework in which I can locate the construction of racial segmentation and segregation, Black 'pathology',[12] and the policing and surveillance of bodies of color as interconnected aspects of a larger *organic* crisis in the United States. I re-present the work of scholars in Communication Studies to highlight the impact of race(d) representations in the media and the way in which racist common sense and moral panics about people of color are shaped and perpetuated in popular discourses.

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[12] My use of quotes here indicates that I acknowledge the existence of socially constructed pathologies of Black people and blackness in popular thought; however, I remain very critical of the origins and mobilization of these pathologies within common sense logic.

My research is grounded in an analysis of my professional experience in school communications and a review of research on education and educational practices and policies in the United States. Specifically, I look at studies on school cultures of control, school safety, discipline and surveillance methods, racial equity, and the achievement gap. I refer to the well-documented history of Evanston, Illinois, and Evanston Township High School to provide context for this specific locale. Here I analyze publically available district communications, including archival documents, school reports, school Web pages, and data collected through previously published qualitative research (focus groups, conversations, oral histories). I examine a large and diverse sample of local news websites that utilize representations of Evanston youths. Specifically, I focus my research on community-specific news websites[13] because these spaces are grounded in hyper-local discourses despite being operated as a mass-market medium (for example, the Evanston Patch.com is a local news and information platform of Patch Media Corporation, a wholly-owned subsidiary of mass media producer AOL Inc.).[14] Community-specific news websites also allow for the greatest range in signifiers (i.e. image, text) and thus meaning. Published books, journal articles, and newspaper articles on Evanston, Illinois, and Evanston Township High School also inform this analysis. Finally I draw on Frederick Corey's conception of the "personal narrative" as an explanatory tool to disrupt and discredit the master narrative.[15] Through the personal narrative I am able to alternate "between the public and private, between what is said and what is thought, between the individual and society, between the

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[13] By community-specific news website I am referring to websites that subscribe to some level of journalistic practice to deliver news and information to a particular community in an online format. Community-specific news websites are owned by commercial media outlets, institutions, and individual journalists. These sites are interactive, allowing visitors to leave comments and or register to post opinion blogs.

[14] Source: http://evanston.patch.com/privacy.

[15] According to Frederick Corey, the master narrative "is public, historical, documented, and hegemonic. The master narrative is an artillery of moral truth, and the personal narrative defixes that truth. The master narrative is a cultural discourse, replete with epistemic implications, and the personal narrative is a mode of "reverse discourse" (Foucault, "Subject")" (250). In this sense the master narrative informs the identity of marginalized individuals, but through the *personal narrative*, peoples on the periphery are able to "tell about personal, lived experience in a way that assists in the construction of identity, reinforces or challenges private and public belief systems and values, and either resists or reinforces the dominant cultural practices of the community in which the narrative event occurs (Stem and Henderson 35)" (Corey 250).

regulations of language and the regulations of the body…" (Corey 250) to underscore the many contradictions of cultural discourse. My personal narrative holds no claim to universal, naturalized truth. Rather, I share my own memories as a school worker – and as a White mother of a young man of color who attends that school – to challenge the hegemonic notion of what it means to educate and parent – and to some extent *be* – a young person of color in the United States. My personal story amplifies *possibilities* for resistance and highlights examples of persistent struggles against oppression that are often overlooked and undervalued.

This chapter introduces the reader to the construction of the educational crisis in relation to the larger *organic* crisis in the United States. Next, Chapter 2 examines how school cultures of control are shaped through racist common sense that is lifted up through moral panics and mobilized through public opinion, the media, and schools themselves. Here I look at the ways in which a school's culture is formed in general, and how control cultures are activated through schools to destroy the cultural and racial identity of peoples of color. In this Chapter I focus on the impact of social control on male youths under the umbrella of blackness because of the way racist common sense feeds into the social construction of Black criminality. The experience at the Carlisle Indian Industrial School (CIIS) in Pennsylvania will be presented for historical context, and will be juxtaposed with contemporary perspective on cultures of control, discipline, and the policing of blackness in U.S. public schools. The role and presence of whiteness will be examined as well.

Chapter 3 briefly explores how a history of racist and neoliberal traditions of White philanthropy and paternalism shapes and continues to shape the Black experiences in the context of Evanston, Illinois. Here, I look at how Evanston's history of moral panics create and recreate constructed *pathologies* about its young people of color and their families that positions them as

inadequate, deviant, and potential threats in the school community. I examine how these panic

discourses are articulated within the framework of a crisis to sustain a control culture at ETHS.

In my examination, I demonstrate how panic discourses in particular and the educational crisis in

a broader sense is used to actively regulate and discipline bodies outside the norm and realm of

whiteness, which produces an essentialist framework of an "All-American" normative culture

through which youth identity is to be conceptualized and created. In Chapter 4 I draw on Dick

Hebdige's framework for spectacular youth subculture to highlight the ways in which subculture

is a site where young people of color can resist the regulation of their bodies and imposed

conceptions of self. Here I argue how youth subculture presents young people with *possibilities*

for stylistic expression (such as 'sagging pants' style) and identity formation that can resist,

refuse and even (re)mix school cultures of control. I conclude by discussing future possibilities

for sites of contestation and suggest areas of focus for future study.

The origins of a 'crisis': the state, youth, and social control in U.S. schools

In order to understand the complex ways in which state racism works in education, we must

first look at the role of ideology and the ways in which racism is produced and reproduced inside

and outside state apparatuses in the form of a crisis. Hall explains that dominant cultural

production in the U.S. is rooted in ideology that promotes hegemony[16] in an effort to bolster

industrialization (via labor power and consumption) and protect the American way of life –

"capitalism, consumerism, and commodity production" (Deitz 83) – in the name of "freedom,

equality, property and bentham" ("Problem of Ideology" 35). Inderpal Grewal agrees with Hall

and conceptualizes the construct of 'America' as a nationalist discourse that produces "many

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[16] Grossberg's definition of hegemony is helpful here. He tells us that "Hegemony points to the struggle to capture the state by a certain alliance of economic interests which carries on a war of positions (of temporary alliances at multiples sites of struggle) through which the hegemonic bloc continually attempts to win consent to its leadership and to its efforts to reorganize the political locations, allegiances and power of various fractions of the population - all in response to a national - organic – crisis (which is of course discursively constructed)" (Cultural Studies 13).

kinds of agency and diverse subjects" (2) both locally and globally. As such, Grewal tells us, 'American' national identity functions as "a discourse of neoliberalism making possible struggles for rights through consumerist practices and imaginaries" (2) throughout the national boundaries of the United States and on a global stage. Through this ideological nationalist discourse, the image of the *ideal* "All-American" laborer and consumer[17] is produced: the moral citizen who has the diversified skills to compete and establish belonging through consumer practices within a global context, thus promoting the neoliberal policies and economic interests of the United States.

According to Louis Althusser, ideology does not reflect the real world, but is a "'representation' of the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence" (162). Hall adds that ideology is the "mental framework – the languages, concepts, categories, imagery of thought and the systems of representation – which different classes and social groups deploy in order to make sense of, define, figure out and render intelligible the way society works" ("Problem of Ideology" 29). Althusser (166) explains that an ideology is made visible through its articulation in an Ideological State Apparatus (ISA)[18] as a material force or symbolic practice(s). Ideology, as a material force, operates in such a way that, according to

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[17] Grewal explains that within 'American' nationalist discourse, "the right to consume became an important aspect of the struggle for full citizenship and identity in the United States" (30). She tells us that "lifestyle, 'taste,' and fashion become central to producing difference through processes of 'branding' in advertising and mass media" (Grewal 30). These lifestyles created an "American consciousness" in which consumption is linked to democracy and choice, and mobilized through a discourse of rationalization. Grewal highlights George Ritzer's "McDonaldization" theory which states that "the principles of efficiency, calculability, predictability, and control of human beings through material technologies underlie a globalizing consumer culture" (Grewal 30). Consumer culture, then, "provided the modalities through which national and international belongings could be imagined, and resistant identities recognized" (Grewal 17).

[18] Althusser tells us relations of production in capitalist structures are initially "reproduced by the materiality of the processes of production and circulation" (148), and are subsequently "secured by the exercise of State power in the State Apparatuses, on the one hand the (Repressive) State Apparatus, on the other the Ideological State Apparatuses" (149). Althusser explains that while the repressive State Apparatus functions 'by violence' (i.e., physical force from police or military, administrative commands) in the public domain, the Ideological State Apparatuses (ISAs) "function massively and predominantly by ideology" (145) in the private realm. He adds that ISAs function secondarily by repressive acts that are most often concealed or symbolic in nature. In this sense, ISAs are "a realization of an ideology (the unity of these different regional ideologies - religious, ethical, legal, political, aesthetic, etc. - being assured by their subjection to the ruling ideology)" (Althusser 166). Althusser identifies the following institutions as ISAs: "the religious ISA (the system of the different Churches); the educational ISA (the system of the different public and private 'Schools'); the family ISA; the legal ISA; the political ISA (the political system, including the different Parties); the trade-union ISA; the communications ISA (press, radio and television, etc.); the cultural ISA (Literature, the Arts, sports, etc.)" (Althusser 145). According to Althusser (153-55) the bourgeoisie replaced the Church (religious ISA) with the School, making the educational ISA the dominant ideological State apparatus in modern capitalist systems. Although I realize that Althusser focuses on a specific historical context, his explanation of the significance of the school system as an ideological state apparatus rings true today.

Althusser, "it 'recruits' subjects among the individuals (it recruits them all), or 'transforms' the individuals into subjects (it transforms them all)" (174) by what he calls "interpellation" (174). In this sense, ideology acts as a mediator between systems of power and individuals who are thus "*always-already* interpellated by ideology as subjects" (Althusser 174).

The School is an important site to explore the articulation of ideology and the subjection of youth and adults alike. In fact, Althusser (155-56) tells us that the School plays a *dominant* role in reproducing capitalist relations of production in part because no other ISA has the mandatory audience of all of the nation's children – the future producers and consumers –for eight hours a day, five days a week. Althusser (131-32) explains that the articulation of ideology through education ensures the reproduction of the diversified skills of labor power and the ideological subjection required of consumer culture in a capitalist regime. The reproduction of these relations of production occurs by subjecting youth of every age and every grade level to a "certain amount of 'know-how' wrapped in the ruling ideology (French, arithmetic, natural history, the sciences, literature) or simply the ruling ideology in its pure state (ethics, civic instruction, philosophy)" (Althusser 155).

In addition, school agents and parents alike must be immersed in the dominant ideology of the nation-state to some extent "in order to perform their tasks 'conscientiously'"(Althusser 133) and shape youth subjects into workers – and with any luck the intellectually superior, moral, and highly-productive kind. Here we can begin to imagine the importance of the Family[19] as a critical site. For example, after school agents perform tasks that support and promote the aforementioned neoliberal logic for eight hours a day in school hallways and classrooms, adult family members, for the most part, assume this role and rearticulate and reinforce ideological thought and

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[19] Althusser (157) explains that when School replaced the Church in its role as the dominant ISA, the School became coupled with the Family just as the Church was once coupled with the Family. Thus, the School (*and* the School-Family couple) constitutes the dominant ISA and plays a significant role in the reproduction of the *relations of production* in capitalist systems.

practices after hours. In the minds of the ruling elite, the School remains the primary site for the reproduction of capitalist relations of production, and the Family is coupled with it. However, Althusser (157) notes that this pairing is significant when looking at the *political* significance behind the educational 'crisis' that persists in nation-states across the globe. He goes on to tell us that the crisis on education is constructed – in conjunction with a larger organic crisis – to shake the education system and the family system alike (Althusser 157). In the context of the U.S., the educational crisis is (re)generated to highlight the ideological importance of the School, and the School-Family pairing, as the prevailing sites where the reproduction of American consumer capitalism occurs. From this, Althusser concludes, the reproduction of labor power and consumption requires not only a reproduction of a skilled workforce, but also, "the reproduction of its subjection to the ruling ideology or of the 'practice' of that ideology" (133). Thus, the School (and the School-Family pairing) provides the perfect framework through which repressive and ideological modes of control can be mobilized and the skills and the subjections of the U.S. nation-state can be created and recreated.

In the context of education, the articulation of ideology plays out in the control mechanisms that seek to police and contain young people in public schools.[20] While there are many mechanisms of control to scrutinize in education, ideology is most visibly mobilized through discourses on student achievement and the administration of discipline and punishment in schools. Ann Ferguson's research on the role of U.S. public schools in the making of Black masculinity agrees that routine practices of classification through academic performance, psychological screening measures, and distribution of rewards or punishment are used by school systems and the state to "construct the 'truth' of who we are" (53). In this sense, schools shape

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[20] While my research focuses on *public* education, the only realm of education of which I am qualified to speak, it should be noted that Althusser (143) includes both *public* and *private* schools within the construct of the educational ideological state apparatus.

young people's ideological self-conceptions and produce individual social identities such as "'good,' 'bad,' 'gifted,' 'having potential,' 'troubled,' and 'troublesome'" (Ferguson 52). My experiences at ETHS would add the following socially constructed identities: "AP (Advanced Placement)," "honors," "top performers," "at risk," "academic middle," "enriched," "struggling," and even "frequent flyers." Ferguson presents Pierre Bourdieu's theory on radical schooling and Michel Foucault's theory of disciplinary power to assert the ways in which this 'truth' – or socially constructed representation of the 'individual' – is created and reproduced *through* the various ideological state apparatuses such as the School, the Family, and mass media discourses in the United States.

First, Ferguson explains how Bourdieu's radical schooling theory makes a case that "schools embody the class interests and ideology of the dominant class, which has the power to impose its views, standards, and cultural forms – its 'cultural capital' – as superior" (53). This theory proposes that a "hidden curriculum" that reflects the cultural hegemony of the ruling class is mobilized to reinforce and reproduce dominant ideology by "exacerbating and multiplying – rather than diminishing or eliminating – the 'inequalities' children bring from home and neighborhood to school" (Ferguson 50). Through my experiences in school communications I have observed how this hidden curriculum perpetuates a school-wide ideology that excludes and isolates poor youth and their families in general and young people of color and their families in particular.

For example, one focus group[21] member who participated in a 2009 study on the school's racialized experience explained that many of the course options and required class materials (i.e., books, digital resources) at ETHS *exclude* the particular histories of the Black Diasporic

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[21] This purpose of the focus group will be discussed more thoroughly in Chapter 3.

communities of color in Evanston. The participant stated the school required "no books of interest that black kids want to read" and concluded that including culturally responsive materials in the curriculum must not be "important to the departments and school" (Autrey and Cowdery 8). Thus, the specific tastes and ideology of the ruling class elite are implicitly maintained and sustained *through* educational systems, school agent curricular choices, and conceivably through the young bodies who consent to this logic and graduate from these systems.

Next, Ferguson explains how Foucault's theory of disciplinary power "conceptualizes discipline broadly as the mechanism for a new mode of domination that constitutes us as *individuals* with a specific perception of our identity and potential that appears natural rather than the product of relations of power" (50). Through this framework of disciplinary power, young people are "sorted, evaluated, ranked, [and] compared on the basis of (mis)behavior" (Ferguson 50) in relation to their willingness to consent to dominant ideology and conform to school rules. In this sense, the "individual" (as an *always-already* interpellated subject) is constructed through a system of routine assessment and surveillance measures rooted in the dominant ideology of the School apparatus. Ferguson tells us that this popularly constructed notion of *individual difference* informs how we make sense of "who we are in the world, and [how] we are known by others" (52). Here we can begin to see how the ideological concept of individual difference and the measures used to produce it are vital mechanisms of control for the reproduction of the capitalist structure.

For example, Althusser explains that youth around the age of sixteen are ejected 'into production' in nation-states around the globe as "workers or small peasants" (155) who are

practically equipped with "the ideology which suits the role[22] it has to fulfill in class society" (155). Ferguson adds that in a racialized society such as the U.S., the fundamental logic for maintaining cultural hegemony is "the elevation of the physical and cultural attributes of whiteness: the dominant group becomes the standard against which "individuals" are measured" (202). In the context of desegregated school systems, disciplinary power becomes an especially relevant technique of regulation and identity formation, particularly because the ideological practice of "ascribing status on the basis of racial superiority and inferiority is no longer legitimate grounds for granting or denying access to resources or attainment of skills" (Ferguson 52).

In the context of Evanston high school, one focus group participant noted how disciplinary power plays out along racial lines:

> "Different consequences for issues are given to white students than black students. When a white student has a knife, it's called a "tool," and that student gets less of a consequence so as not to affect his privileges and academics. We don't want him to fail. Yet, when a student of color has a 'weapon' of half the size, it's considered a threat and a danger in the building, and the student gets the full consequence" (Autrey and Cowdery 11).

In Chapter 2 I will discuss how the role and presence of whiteness in schools has picked up where more *overt* forms of racism have left off. For now it is important to reiterate that the ideological concept of individual difference is represented as a 'natural' phenomenon in popular thought. This naturalization and normalization of individual difference is pinned up against a backdrop of whiteness that creates a *perceived* reality in which one's socially constructed identity – the honors students or the frequent flyer – and their future roles as producers and consumers comes from within the *subject* versus something that is manufactured deliberately and persistently within a systematized ideological framework.

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[22] Althusser describes these roles as: "the role of the exploited (with a 'highly-developed' 'professional', 'ethical', 'civic', 'national' and a political consciousness); the role of the agent of exploitation (ability to give the workers orders and speak to them: 'human relations'), of the agent of repression (ability to give orders and enforce obedience 'without discussion', or ability to manipulate the demagogy of a political leader's rhetoric), or of the professional ideologist" (155-56).

Richard Iton's theories on the nation and national citizenship suggest that this focus on the individual and the embrace of the culture of the state, "in combination with the persistence of racial subtexts and overtexts, and the fetishization of the modern" (198), must be understood as real although unintentional "investments in the long-term viability of coloniality"[23] (197-98). Iton explains that discourses of competitive performativity and respectability that arise from the aforementioned bourgeois lexicon have been instituted as dissuasive campaigns to "persuade publics that the state could not and should not be depended on any longer" (197-98). And yet this nod to rugged individualism and autonomy from the nation-state eclipses the fact that, as Iton points out, "the nation itself, as a modern emergence, cannot sustain nonwhite aspirations for emancipation and that such projects require the decentering of the nation-state and the decoupling of colored subjectivities and the limiting framework of the national" (139). As Iton so pointedly concludes, the model of the nation-state as an organizational mechanism was not designed to apply to people of color and therefore "might be best understood as intrinsically anti-black" (197).

In the case of public education a parallel argument can be made that the monolinguistic, Eurocentric U.S. public school system – an organizational mechanism and cultural apparatus of the American nation-state – is fundamentally "anti-black" and was not constructed, nor has it been (re)constructed, to benefit young people of color and their families. There is no doubt a link between the increased numbers of students of color attending U.S. public schools,[24] the upsurge

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[23] Here I will refer to Richard Iton's reference of Walter Mignolo's observation of coloniality: "[T]here is no modernity without coloniality ... coloniality is constitutive of modernity. That is modernity/coloniality.... [W]hile modernity is presented as a rhetoric of salvation, it hides coloniality, which is the logic of oppression and exploitation." (133).

[24] In 1996, White students made up 64 percent of the total population of elementary and secondary public school enrollment in the U.S. while students of color comprised 36 percent. Comparatively, in 2010 enrollment of students of color in U.S. elementary and secondary public schools came in at 48 percent while enrollment of White students declined to 52 percent. This represents a 12 percent increase in the number of students of color attending U.S. public schools over the past 14 years. Source: National Center for Education Statistics, *Projections of Education Statistics to 2021*, http://nces.ed.gov/programs/projections/projections2021/tables/table_03.asp?referrer=list.

in more sophisticated accountability and surveillance methods, and the subsequent 'crisis' discourses around education that create panics around a global and local achievement gap, the future of the nation, and "pathologies" of blackness. Pauline Lipman agrees that "education policies that target, discipline and criminalize people of color help reproduce the ideological basis for a racialized nationalism and imperialism" (171).

According to Ferguson even the federal funding for compensatory education is stigmatized and constructed around a deficit perspective that portrays Black children and their families as "culturally disadvantaged" (55). Here she describes "compensatory education" as special classes tailored to treat or compensate for an "at-risk" student's specific deficiency for which they have been diagnosed. In her research, the overwhelming majority of students who are ranked and labeled against national norms as below average, failing, and "at-risk" are poor and Black. At the elementary school level students are pulled out of their regular classrooms during the day to attend compensatory classes. Ferguson (54-56) argues that these pull out courses contribute to racial resegregation in schools and are part of a system of instruction that keeps "at-risk" children locked into the same level of learning and under an increased level of surveillance and control. Ferguson (55) explains that this approach eclipses the superiority of the White, middle-class culture in U.S. public schools, and reinforces a dominant, anti-black perspective that persistently ignores and represses the values, lived experiences, and knowledge of Black and Brown youth.

Using Iton's coloniality framework, an argument could be made that the gap discourses around student achievement, for example, have less to do with individual academic performance and more accurately are a highlighting of coloniality. In this context the gap shifts from the popularly constructed narrative of the individual's (in)capacity and (in)ability to achieve to a

discourse that centers the gap on the school as a space of coloniality that exists beyond the end of empire: "the race/gender matrix, hierarchical labor relations, and the panics and ensuing competition justified by narratives suggesting the inevitability of scarcity and the state as the most reliable procurer, defender, and organizer" (Iton 199). In the sense the School, as a space of coloniality, creates the construct through which the convenient and necessary Other of the citizen is produced: "the exploitable, expendable, and disposable (and Blackened) body (aka 'the nigger')" (Iton 135). The discursive formation of the achievement gap, then, becomes the "shifting processes through and by which identities are ascribed, hierarchically and spatially arranged, and consequently options, choices, and life-chances, are determined and dictated" (Iton 199).

Indeed, at ETHS, the 'achievement gap' has become a site where the struggle over hegemony occurs. One focus group member expressed that, from her/his perspective, "the biggest barrier to closing racial achievement disparities is getting white people in the community to recognize they have been the benefactors of privilege" (Autrey and Cowdery 14). Through the ideological construct of whiteness that renders white privilege as invisible, White students, staff, and parents typically do not recognize the symbolic and material privileges afforded to them through this anti-black framework. People in privileged positions are not *actively* deconstructing the ideological systems of oppression that shape education – such as racism, sexism, and classism – on a regular basis, if at all. Thus, the hyperarticulated focus on the individual (and individual difference) in gap discourses perpetuates the white-privileging mechanisms that have already had profound implications for the way young people of color, their families, and their communities are perceived. In this next section I will describe how a socially constructed and highly racialized and gendered crisis about education has been constructed in the United States.

The making of a crisis: the role of moral panics

I was in my first year of graduate school when I began working in school communications. As my professors shared the work of critical communication scholars, I started to look at the systems of oppression and role of the modern capitalist state in cultural institutions such as schools. Still I imagined schools, including the university where I was enrolled, as independent learning communities that would provide a liberating, ideologically free educational experience that was in the best interest of all students. Admittedly I had not yet understood the ways in which state cultural institutions such as the School, the Family and the media were always-already *mechanisms* of the capitalist, neoliberal structures charged with a specific purpose of producing *particular* images of the model student and 'good' citizen. The fundamental "ah-ha" moment occurred for me while reading Stuart Hall and his colleagues' 1978 book, Policing the Crisis: Mugging, the State, and Law and Order.

In the book the scholars presented their findings from a study on the ideological dimensions of the "mugging" phenomenon in the specific locale of Handsworth, England. Their analysis was not centered on *why* or *how* individuals mug, but rather, the way in which the *socially constructed crisis* about mugging – shaped by the media, the police, and institutions of the state – became to mean a crisis about Black youth in popular thought. The scholars described how, through a series of highly structured and sequenced discourses, the terms 'mugging' and 'Black crime' became virtually synonymous in both the official and public consciousness (Hall et al. 327). The study revealed that anti-black ideologies of crime and punishment "were made active and were realized in concrete practices and apparatuses" (Hall et al. 83) in order to maintain the dominant ideology and promote and expand the capitalist regime. Specifically, in their chapter on "Crime, Law, and the State," Hall and his partners determined that "the

conditions for capitalist production and the reproduction of its social relations must be articulated through *all* the levels of the social formation – economic, political, ideological" (Hall et al. 201).

Hall et al.'s study on the mugging crisis is an important framework for understanding the ways in which the contemporary education crisis has become a crisis about 'deficient' or 'criminal' Black and Brown youth and their families. Scholars of education theory propose that the educational response to the presence of students of color in modern-world school systems such as the U.S. and Britain has been framed in a deficit perspective in terms of the alleged problems that students of color pose to the institution (Carby 181; Irizarry 30-31; Ladson-Billings "Glass" 117-18). Specifically, contemporary failure discourses in the U.S. are linked to common sense racist logic that constructs "the residents of urban communities (particularly youth) as menaces from the margins and threats to our national character and safety" (Duncan-Andrade 27). Federal data sets such as test scores, graduation/drop out rates, suspension data, etc., also suggest a link between this 'failure' and the individual. Yet it seems hard to believe that the increase of students of color in public schools and upsurge in the persistent promotion of gap discourses about achievement, matriculation, and punishment is entirely *unrelated* to the larger crisis that positions blackness and Black Diasporic youth as a blemish in American nationalist discourse. In other words, borrowing from the question that Hall and his colleagues (16) asked: if the popular reaction to gap discourses – produced through a crisis about education – cannot be explained by a straightforward reference to the data, how *can* it be explained? Hall et al. suggest that the socially constructed reaction to a "crisis" can be explained by reframing it as a *moral panic*.

A moral panic is evident "when the official reaction to a person, groups of persons or series of events *is out of all proportion* to the actual threat offered" (Hall et al. 16). The scholars

reference Stan Cohen's study of mods and rockers, *Folk Devils and Moral Panic*, to provide a

definition of "moral panic" that is worth reading in its entirety:

> "Societies appear to be subject, every now and then, to periods of moral panic. A condition, episode, person or group of persons emerges to become defined as a threat to societal values and interests: its nature is presented in a stylized and stereo-typical fashion by the mass media; the moral barricades are manned by editors, bishops, politicians, and other right-thinking people; socially accredited experts pronounce their diagnoses and solutions; ways of coping are evolved or (more often) resorted to; the condition then disappears, submerges, deteriorates and becomes more visible. Sometimes the object of the panic is quite novel and at other times it is something which has been in existence long enough, but suddenly appears in the limelight. Sometimes the panic is passed over and is forgotten, except in folklore and collective memory; at other times it has more serious and long-lasting repercussions and might produce such changes as those in legal and social policy or even in the way society conceives itself" (Stan Cohen as quoted in Hall et al. 16-17).

The perpetual educational crisis in the U.S., then, establishes the conditions through which a

moral panic about Black and Brown youth and their families can occur. Through a panic

framework, ideological discourses on discipline and surveillance are *transformed* by the

"common-sense images of black criminality" and "pathological conceptions of black life"

(Gilroy "Police and Thieves" 143) made active by the media and cultural institutions of the state.

As Paul Gilroy explained in his analysis of the methods used by law enforcement to police

Black people and blackness, these racist common-sense images and ideas serve as the

"*operational* analysis for the state's institutions of social control" ("Police and Thieves" 151) and

are precisely situated as mechanisms to legitimate policing tactics "and methods for containment

of social disorder" ("Police and Thieves" 151). Hall and his colleagues also argue that these

cultural institutions play a primary role "in defining situations, in selecting targets, in initiating

'campaigns', in structuring these campaigns, in selectively signifying their actions to the public

at large, in legitimating their actions through the accounts of situations they produce" (52). Thus,

with this relationship between cultural institutions and the construction of crisis in mind, I began

monitoring how the achievement gap and other phenomenon about education was discussed in

public discourse and handled in local media. On a routine basis I examined a variety of news reports and public comment from primary definers of information (police officers, publically elected city officials and school board members, etc.). I read the opinions shared on community-specific news websites. I reviewed literature produced by educational institutions and scholars and read numerous panic discourses about how the U.S. nation in general, and the growing demographic of young people of color, in particular, is falling behind the rest of the economically developed world.

For example, in a 2010 report titled "The Educational Crisis Facing Young Men of Color," Gaston Caperton, the president of the College Board[25] – a key producer of academic courses and testing programs across the U.S. – declared that "the United States is losing ground in the international competition to produce superior intellectual talent" (CBAPC Preface). This report, which summarizes four one-day seminars organized by the College Board to "explore the educational challenges facing young men of color in the U.S." (CBAPC 2), highlights how discourse around globalization and the advancement of the U.S nation-state is directly linked to a crisis about education that focuses on the perceived academic achievement (in)abilities of males under the umbrella of blackness. This call to action by Caperton implies that crisis management is necessary if the U.S. expects to produce more ideal American workers and consumers who can sustain the hegemonic structures needed to "secure economic, ideological and political power and domination" (Solomos et al. 25-26) in a global context.

A seminar participant reinforces Caperton's views with this opinion:

> "This [educational crisis] is not a minority issue but an American issue, with powerful consequences for America's families and for the nation's social and economic well-being"
> – *Seminar participant* (CBAPC 5)

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[25] According to its website, The College Board is a "not-for-profit" membership association whose mission is to connect students to college success and opportunity. Among its fee-based, college readiness and assessment programs are the SAT®, the PSAT/NMSQT®, and the Advanced Placement Program® (AP®). Source: www.collegeboard.org.

Crisis management, in this sense, does not seem to include a plan to eliminate the racially specific mechanisms of social control that schools use to police and contain the "minority groups with the lowest levels of educational attainment" (CBAPC 18) that also happen to be the "fastest-growing populations in the United States" (CBAPC 18). Rather, an argument could be made that social control, mobilized through "the principles of efficiency, calculability, predictability, and control of human beings through material technologies" (Grewal 30), is the precise ingredient required for producing the "All-American" consumer and worker – particularly a competitive worker with "superior intellectual talent" who can produce and consume in a transnational setting.

Another example of the crisis on education can be seen in the neighboring Chicago Public Schools (CPS) system. According to report issued by the Chicago Teachers Union (CTU), CPS has seen the profit-minded community insert itself directly into education through a socially constructed "crisis of underutilization"[26] (Caref et al. 11-12). The report explains that the crisis has been "manufactured largely to justify the replacement of neighborhood schools by privatized charters" and is justified through moral panics of "failed schools" (Caref et al. 8). The schools that were classified by CPS as 'failed' were predominately Black schools, signifying what the report is calling "educational apartheid":

> "In all, tens of thousands of students have been directly impacted by CPS School Actions since 2001 [school actions include closings, turnarounds, consolidations, and phase-outs]. 88 percent of students affected are African-American. Schools that are over 99 percent students of color ("Apartheid schools") have been the primary target of CPS school actions—representing over 80 percent of all affected schools. Black communities have been hit the hardest—3 out of every 4 affected schools were economically poor and intensely segregated African-American schools" (Caref et al. 3).

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[26] The socially constructed crisis of "underutilization" has multiple components. According to the CTU report, CPS "schools that have been closed, turned around and phased out all had histories of high chronic truancy in the years leading up to the disruptive school actions" (11). In addition, the report explains that the District claims, "because school enrollments are low and schools have excess space, CPS suffers from inefficiencies that could be remedied by combining schools" (13). Also, the District "can change a school's attendance boundary to reduce the number of students assigned to a school. The school's utilization rate then declines when those students do not attend" (13).

Furthermore, in 2011 Black teachers represented sixty-five percent of the teaching staff in the CPS schools designated for closures and forty percent of tenured teachers laid off, causing a "decline of Black educators and the racial imbalance between the teachers and the students in CPS" (Caref et al. 10).[27] As a result, mostly Black youth in Chicago are displaced from their neighborhoods and inserted into corporately supported charter schools run by primarily White educators who, through an application and lottery process, have essentially weeded out representations of *potentially* pathological students, such as those "who have difficult family situations or less interest in school" (Caref et al. 10).

The school actions occurring in CPS highlight how the educational crisis can also be linked to the failure of the School itself (vs. the individual). Returning to Althusser (131-32), we are reminded of the School's primary role: to reproduce the consumer culture, diversified skills of labor power, and the ideological subjection required in a capitalist regime. In the CPS example, there has been deliberate effort by the capitalist regime to create disproportionate failure discourses about CPS schools that serve poorer and mostly Black students while sustaining and protecting the CPS schools that serve wealthier and Whiter students. As the CTU report explains, a crisis of "underutilization" has been used in recent years "to close and/or consolidate neighborhood schools in Black communities and hand over facilities to unaccountable private operators" (Caref et al. 13). In this sense, what appears to be "for the good of American families" is actually only good for those in the norm and realm of whiteness or those few who stand to gain from global competition and profits.

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[27] According to the CTU report, Black teachers make up 26 percent of all teachers in the Chicago Public School system, and "only 22 percent of teachers identified as Black among CPS charter schools in 2011, compared to the roughly 60 percent of Black students in charters" (Caref et al. 10).

It is not surprising to me that, following the increased presence of Black and Brown youth in larger numbers of Whiter public schools in recent years, discourse on the education crisis in 2013 shifted from issues of *race* to the topic of *poverty* (see Oliver Thomas' USA Today column, "A poverty, not education, crisis in U.S." or Sparks and Adams' article, "High School Poverty Levels Tied to College-Going"). While the topic of poverty goes beyond the scope of this paper, this shift in mass media discourse directly counters the efforts of critical education scholars in recent years[28] to talk more specifically about the impact of race and racism in U.S. public schools. At a much broader level, by lifting up the issue of poverty, corporate media makers as well as education scholars steeped in the ideology of the School are making a deliberate (and in my opinion desperate) attempt on behalf of the bourgeois ruling class to conceal the persistence of racism in U.S. schools. Aimee Carrillo Rowe's explanation of "white victimage" is helpful here. Carrillo Rowe tells us that in the contemporary U.S., the discursive formation of white victimage is lifted up "through the cultural production of white anxiety at the perceived dissolution of historically centered white identity, now displaced by the shifting racial and national configuration of its population" ("Whose "America"?" 116). In this sense white victimage discourse positions whiteness "as the necessary foundation of national civility" (Carrillo Rowe "Whose "America"?" 116) and a construct that is under siege by Black and Brown bodies in popular thought. Carrillo Rowe concludes that the logics of white victimization legitimize regressive politics "through the assumption of a level playing field ('we are all victims now'), which undermines claims to inclusion by systematically excluded groups" ("Whose "America"?" 116).

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[28] In addition to the examples I share in this paper, also refer to Gloria Ladson-Billings' article, "Through a Glass Darkly: The Persistence of Race in Education Research & Scholarship."

By reframing the education crisis from topics of race to the topic of poverty, White youth can be imagined as *potential* 'victims' rather than the primary beneficiaries of white-privileging structures in gap discourses. This shift from topics of race and racism to poverty constructs an image of a post-racial society, (re)positioning the School as a liberating construct that is free from ideological and repressive structures where youth of *all* colors can compete in an equal academic arena. Indeed, neoliberal constructs of private property rights, free markets, and free trade *require* this sort of reframing in order to reproduce capitalist relations of production and consumption and to sustain subjection to dominant ideology amongst the growing racialized majority. Yet despite this shift, for peoples on the margins, control cultures continue to serve the very purpose for which they were created. Thus, returning to my earlier question, public opinion on gap discourses must be explained by looking at the *origins* of moral panics on education and critically examining the ideological state apparatuses – such as corporate media makers, law enforcement, and educational institutions – that *organize* the educational crisis within them.

Chapter 2: Policing of 'Blackness' through Cultures of Control

I often reflect on my inaugural year working in public education to understand *how* these education policies that target, discipline and criminalize people of color are created and maintained in cultural institutions. Specifically, I spend time revisiting my personal narrative, juxtaposed with tales from the master narrative, in an effort to understand *why* teachers – the majority of whom are White females[29] such as myself – and other school agents so easily subscribe to the policing and containment methods that disproportionately target marginalized youth. How does public opinion about academic achievement, school safety, and community violence help shape systems of control in schools? Why do contemporary schools with increasing numbers of Black and Brown youth still operate in a way that benefits mostly White students while harming students of color? What is it that determines the kind of culture a school will have in the first place? To answer these questions, it is important to look at not only the ways in which the dimensions of power and politics play out *within* cultural apparatuses like schools, but also, the active forces that are taking place *outside* of these institutions such as the media and public opinion.

Mobilizing 'racist common sense': the media and public opinion

In the particular locale of Evanston, Illinois, more than 3,100[30] youth from every neighborhood, every racial/ethnic backgrounds and socio-economic status attend one public high school. In this sense, the high school is a microcosm of the city's population density[31] and economic, ethnic and racial diversity. The politics of this proximity have no doubt played an

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[29] According to the National Center for Education Statistics, 84 percent of public school teachers are White females. Twenty-two percent of all teachers in 2011 were under the age of 30 (p. 12-15). Source: *Profile of Teachers in the U.S. 2011* http://www.ncei.com/Profile_Teachers_US_2011.pdf.

[30] Source: http://www.eths.k12.il.us/about/.

[31] According to the 2010 Census, the city of Evanston contains nearly 75,000 people living in an eight-mile radius. Source: http://cityofevanston.org/evanston-life/history-demographics/.

integral part in the construction of vast word of mouth networks among the youth and adults in

the school community – conversations with friends or between neighbors, discussions at sporting

events, exchanges on local blogs, social networking sites and via text message. Throughout my

experience of overseeing communications at the high school I have marveled at the depth and

distribution rate of this local "grapevine," particularly when an extraordinary event occurs. In

fact, students, parents, staff, retired staff and even alumni (many of whom are also staff and

parents) disseminate word of mouth accounts of events that happen in the school or surrounding

community within minutes of it occurring, well before a primary definer of information releases

an official statement.[32] For instance, if a retired ETHS school employee passes away, my office

generally receives an email or phone call from former colleagues, acquaintances and sometimes

relatives of the retiree to inform us of the death *before* an obituary is produced. In fact, *in*

memoriam flyers with a funeral date and location are often dropped off before details of the

funeral service have been confirmed between the family and the funeral home or place of

worship. It is time to take a look at how panic discourses are similarly lifted up through public

opinion discourses in the media and word of mouth.

    The saturation of technology tools and online communication channels has blurred the line

between the social and the mediated organization of public opinion even further. Now social

interaction – the rumor mill, opinions, local knowledge – is inserted into highly-structured online

spaces for public consumption via social media networks, blogs, and public comment sections of

news websites. While online channels appear to provide an "open" forum that provides equal

access for all voices to participate in casual social interchanges, these spaces are ultimately an

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[32] Hall and his colleagues noted a strikingly similar communication phenomenon in the Handsworth community during the mugging crisis: "the interplay of knowledge, rumors, folk-lore and opinions [in Handsworth] constitutes a critical, and primary, level at which opinion begins to shape up about an event…long before the media appropriate it" (135). The scholars determined, however, that public opinion cannot remain at the informal or disorganized level for long: "The very actions of the control culture, and of the media, in mapping [an] event into society-wide perspectives and contexts serve to raise the threshold of public opinion…into more public channels" (135).

extension of the control culture, owned by media producers and controlled by an editor or site owner who determines the particular types of social interchanges that occur through "terms of use" agreements. The *Evanston Patch*, for example, states that while users of the site are encouraged "to be honest and post what's on their mind," the Patch Media Corporation "will make all determinations as to what Content is appropriate at its sole discretion" and "may include, edit or remove any Content at any time without notice."[33] Thus, returning to Hall et al.'s earlier point, when looking at the construction of public opinion and the resulting panics we must always look at *"who"* has a primary role in defining the news story and *"who"* is invited to help structure the debate. Community-specific news websites, then, become important sites to consider when researching the public opinion on panic discourse.

In these online spaces, media makers create and sustain racist common-sense logic by inserting *public images* into news headlines and stories, and by allowing site visitors to weave racist imagery into opinion blog posts and mostly-anonymous comment submissions. Along these lines, the Patch Media Corporation's terms of use require that users agree to not post content that is deemed "threatening, harassing or that promotes racism, bigotry, hatred or physical harm of any kind against any group or individual" (Patch Media Corporation). However, despite this requirement, comments on the *Evanston Patch* site are, for the most part, rampant with sentiments that are either explicitly or implicitly racist, or promoting "physical harm" against specific groups or individuals. One commenter highlights this common behavior perfectly in a critique of the remarks made by a regular commenter on the *Patch* site:

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[33] Source: http://evanston.patch.com/terms

Harry Lime June 28, 2013 at 08:34 pm

"Is his comment really much worse than yours? You've said you want to hang Snowden on a
lamppost without trial, that our president is a Kenyan tinpot dictator, made borderline racist
assumptions about an 18 year old who committed a crime, and now you want to buy guns at a
city gun buy back event organized by the mother of an innocent, murdered by a gun child. I think
Jimmy is reasonable compared to that."

(Fisher "Gun Buyback")

Through this account the commenter criticizes the use of *explicit* threats of violence and anything

that would appear *overtly* racist in this public forum, though *implicitly* racist discourse and

threats of violence are not directly discouraged.

According to Hall et. al., a public image is an ideological mechanism, "a cluster of

impressions, themes, quasi-explanations" (118) that is fused together in public and journalistic

discourse. The public image is "graphically compelling, but also [stops] short of serious,

searching analysis" (Hall et al. 118). The scholars determine that the public image is evoked

when further analysis of an incident "threatens to go beyond the boundaries of a dominant

ideological field" (Hall et al. 118). In the context of education, the deep analysis of complex

issues such as student achievement and school safety would certainly threaten the hegemonic

structures that are in place to promote the interests of the capitalist state. To avoid a disruption of

the status quo, compelling common-sense racist imagery is conjured up to associate people under

the umbrella of blackness to widely-accepted themes of the "'inadequate family,' 'criminal

youth' and the 'cultures of deprivation' that are thought to sustain them" (Lawrence "Pathology"

54). For example, the topic of school safety reveals local and national ideologies about Black and

Brown youth and their families that extend the education crisis to spaces well *beyond* the

classroom. Despite the fact that White male young adults have orchestrated the recent tragedies

involving gun violence in U.S. public schools [Arapahoe High School in Centennial, CO, Sandy

Hook Elementary School in Newtown, CT; Columbine High School in Columbine, CO], my

analysis of public opinion on school safety reveals that racist logic situates Black Diasporic

youth as the menaces and *potential* criminals that pose the biggest threat of violence to the

general public.

Through my experience in school communications I have observed how these common-

sense conceptions are inserted in discourse about school safety via the carefully crafted

headlines, news stories, and public comments section of local and regional news sites.

Community-specific website coverage of youth crimes in Evanston persistently reproduce racist

public images of Black male youths as *always-already* criminal. Media editors on these sites

select words such as 'felons', 'known offenders', 'gang related' for the headlines or story leads

to situate young men who are suspected of crimes as inherently guilty based on their association

to past crimes or deviant groups. Next, the media makers choose to include a police photo of the

suspect from a prior arrest or a high school year book (available at the public library) to validate

what readers may have already guessed from the coded words in the headlines: the suspect *is* a

young Black male. Finally, the media makers will almost always add descriptors such as

'student(s)', 'former student', and 'ETHS graduate' to lift up the image of the criminal Black

male youth as a 'product' of Evanston's only public high school. What is most significant in this

example of local news coverage is that there is *no news coverage* of White male youth[34] who

have been accused of or associated to youth crimes in or around Evanston.

Indeed, I have yet to see a mug shot of a White male youth[35] 'felon' or 'known offender' or

'gang member' who is also an ETHS 'student' or 'former student' grace the headline news. In

this sense White male youths who are accused of committing crimes – there are no doubt those

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[34] Here I am referring to the socially-constructed category of young people under age 25, broadly termed "youth,"

[35] I have, however, seen one community-specific news report of a White male, age 29, who was arrested for allegedly dealing drugs in a neighboring suburb. He was not associated with ETHS in this news report.

who do – appear to go 'unreported' in the local news, shielded from public scrutiny, their ideological images protected by the communications apparatus. Meanwhile their Black and Brown peers who are suspects of criminal acts are subjected to implications of guilt via the media and public opinion before their trial date is even set. This reinforces how public images are used by primary definers of information to help sustain White male supremacy in the U.S. and to maintain the normalized and naturalized representation of the *ideal* All American worker and consumer in popular thought.

The power of headlines and community-specific websites

The topic of school safety appears to be a high priority for consumers of *Evanston Patch* news as demonstrated through the number of Web page hits to particular headlines. As Hall and his partners suggest, news headlines are "an accurate guide to the themes implicit in a story" (84) considered most newsworthy by the media. According to a list of the top read stories in June 2013, half of the top ten were stories that contained "ETHS" and some indicator of crime or policing in the headline. The following headlines demonstrate how the school is constructed as a site where violence is rampant simply through its proximity to incidents of crime that occur in the surrounding community:

> #1. Heavy Police Activity Outside ETHS. *Multiple people are in police custody after witnesses saw someone fire a gun near Evanston Township High School Tuesday around 4 p.m., according to police.*
>
> #5. Police: Felon Charged with Firing Gun Outside ETHS. *Police arrested a 21-year-old Evanston man whom they say fired a gun outside ETHS Tuesday afternoon following a dispute.*
>
> #7. Robber Knifes Father Dropping Off Son at ETHS. *Evanston police are searching for an armed robber who demanded money, then cut a father who was on his way home from dropping his son off at school, according to police.*
>
> #8. Ald. Grover Witnessed Gunfight Outside ETHS. *Evanston Ald. Jane Grover saw a man firing a gun across from the high school Tuesday afternoon. "I've been so angry since then."*
>
> #10. Police: Reports of Gunfire Center Around ETHS. *Evanston police released a map showing every location where someone reported that shots were fired during the first half of 2013.*

(Chang "Top Ten June 2013")

The implication of situating ETHS in these headlines is significant. Despite the fact that all of these incidents of crime occurred off campus and did not involve current ETHS students or staff, the headlines are constructed to *specifically connect* ETHS to the threatening events. This deliberate and persistent connection by media makers situates a school that contains fifty-seven percent students of color and is located in the predominately Black Fifth Ward neighborhood as the locus of crime and policing in Evanston.

In this sense, the headlines produce a racist public image that links ETHS's (mostly) Black and Brown student body and the surrounding (mostly) Black neighborhood to an image of the inadequate community, or the "ghetto/new slum." Hall and his colleagues described how, in the Handsworth mugging case, the ghetto/new slum image "was inserted at the moment when the crime/environment relationship was most pressing, ideologically (118).[36] In the case of Evanston's crime reports, the headline association to the specific Fifth Ward/ETHS location is significant because the *perception* or 'social fact', as Hall et al. (101) call it, about Evanston is that it is a safe community with a lower incidence of crime and criminals than the neighboring City of Chicago. By condensing the crime and policing to a specific area, Evanston as a whole maintains an image of "safety" and the particularly Black space in and around the high school can be the focus for policing the crisis. Thus, the mobilization of the ghetto/new slum logic *pathologizes* 'inadequate' families of color and their 'deprived' cultures and communities, and *rationalizes* the disproportionate surveillance and policing of young people of color on the streets and in institutional hallways in Evanston and around the U.S.

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[36] The scholars determined that "the 'transparent' association between crime, race, poverty and housing was condensed into the image of the 'ghetto'…and the initial 'problem' – the crime – was thus inserted into a more general 'social problem' where the apparent richness of description and evocation stood in place of analytic connections" (Hall et al. 118)

Digging below these headlines, public opinion in the form of letters-to-the-editor and comments section posts on community-specific new websites is inundated with public images that create and recreate imagery that maintains the supremacy of whiteness and White culture in popular thought. In the anti-black framework that persists via the relationship of coloniality to our Modern or even Postmodern times, these public images situate "white nationalisms (and transnationalisms) [as] natural and unremarkable while black nationalisms are cast as egregious, schizophrenic, constitutively absurd, tragic, deterritorialized, and to some extent performative" (Iton 197). Public images are employed repeatedly in the mostly aliased comments posted by site visitors to construct rational quasi-explanations to tragic crimes and to identify perpetrators to monitor and punish. One *Patch* reader's comments on an opinion article titled, "Where's the Outrage over Continued Violence in Evanston?," directly points to "the Black community" – and the Black families contained within – as *the* root of all issues related to student achievement and school safety:

Festus McMoron June 17, 2013 at 11:24 AM

"…until the majority of the black community begins to understand that everything revolves around a stable home life, nothing is going to get resolved. black parents have to start caring about their children. be involved with their school work. i've read several articles about black kids in school that only 5% of the parents show up for parent-teacher conferences. come on people wake up."

(Wolf)

This comment constructs a racist common sense narrative that links blackness with criminality, family, and education.

Taking this a step further, many of the *Patch* readers' comments related to stories on crime and punishment in the community around ETHS situate Black male youths and their families and neighborhoods as "an 'outside' force, an *alien* malaise" (Lawrence "Pathology" 54).

This widely-accepted perspective is highlighted in an interchange following an article about an attempted car jacking incident:

> **Festus McMoron June 11, 2013 at 01:57 PM**
>
> "i would have run the sob over. i'm sick and disgusted of the crimes blacks are continually pulling here in evanston. they are getting bolder and bolder. this happened at 8 a.m."
>
> **bern June 11, 2013 at 03:38 PM**
>
> "Cowardly bastards. Nothing more. No morals, no social responsibility, no conscience. No place for this kind of being in civilized nations."
>
> **Festus McMoron June 11, 2013 at 09:41 PM**
>
> "too bad [the victim] didn't have a gun underneath his seat. 1 less thug on the streets of evanston. i'm sure he came from a loving family, NOT."
>
> (Fisher "Robber Knifes Father")

These comments, with their racist structure, create and recreate social anxiety around a "threatening Black [male] presence" (Hall et al. 20). The authors' narratives produce a common-sense image of the bold Black menace – an *alien being* from a deprived culture – looming in close proximity, waiting to harm the 'civilized' and destroy the community's ideological beliefs of "freedom, equality, property and bentham" (Hall "Problem of Ideology" 35).

This exchange directly links race ('blacks') and gender ('sob' [son of a bitch], 'bastards') with the criminal ('thug') – "and it defines them all in abnormal, monstrous, and non-human terms" (Hall et al. 134). In fact, throughout my survey of the *Patch* public comments, the image of the young Black male criminal – constructed as 'thug', 'gang member' or 'gangster' (aka the contemporary 'nigger') – is reproduced as *the* threat, as *the* root of all violence in Evanston in popular discourse: "Gangsters, often juvenile, teenage gangsters, are going around Evanston killing, mugging, robbing, and raping people, and not with semiautomatic rifles" ("Tantor" comment as quoted in Stone). This exploitation and pathologizing of the Blackened body

reinforces the necessary Othering of the citizen, as Iton described it, which is required to define

White bodies as natural and normal in popular thought. Hall and his colleagues argued that this

approach locates the racist common-sense notion of criminality "within the tradition of

Lombrosean biological positivism – that is, it takes these monstrosities as forms of 'un-natural'

(not human) perversions, fixed in the biological-criminal type…and it claims to be able to detect

and read this type in terms of its genetic and physical characteristics" (134). In the specific locale

of Evanston, community-specific news sites serve as a particularly powerful arm of the

communications apparatus, packing 'citizens' with "daily doses of nationalism, chauvinism,

liberalism, moralism," (Althusser 154) and, most prominently, ideological notions of white

supremacy.

One commenter responded to the article, "Known Offenders Threatened Student With

Gun, Asked Him to Fight Outside ETHS" with a plea for further containment and policing of a

popularly constructed menace to protect the school building itself. The author of the comment

suggests issues of school safety – which have been socially constructed through *Patch* headlines,

news stories and comments – can be eradicated through the gentrification of the "red hot

drug/crime zone" surrounding the high school. According to this commenter's logic, the *alien*

malaise of the mostly Black Fifth Ward community should be replaced with more "decent people

of all races and ambitions" who will adhere to a particular ideological vision of law and order:

> **Bell F October 22, 2013 at 12:54 PM**
>
> "Honestly, what do you expect to happen when the city allows a red hot drug/crime zone to exits literally right on the curb of its high school. That entire area surrounding the school needs a new vision.... started over, integrated with decent people of all races and ambitions."
>
> (Fisher "Gun Threat")

Returning to the opinion article, "Where's the Outrage Over Continued Violence In Evanston?,"

another commenter suggests that a more *radical* control culture should be established to allow

'good citizens' of Evanston – along with the police – to "follow *these* families [who are thought

to perpetuate violence] everywhere" and go to their homes and "tell *them* to get out [of

Evanston]!" (emphasis mine):

> **michael June 17, 2013 at 02:04 PM**
>
> "When I went to ETHS we had many programs that allowed me to work and go to school. I think it was called DE. We also had 'gang bangers', but no guns. We had parents that did not care too. These we still have. We do not need more guns. We do not need more programs. We need to run these 'familes', that can not raise their children, out of Evanston. Maybe we need to go to their homes and make them feel uncomfortable. Tell them get out! Follow these families everywhere-- I do not want to keep hearing of 'two problem Families'.... I want them and anyone else out of MY COMMUNITY-PERIOD who can not live in some state of peace. Evanston Police put an officer-full-time sitting on these people."
>
> (Wolf)

The commenter posted this clarification just two minutes later:

> **michael June 17, 2013 at 02:06 PM**
>
> 'Oh yes These people are ANYONE who can not get along and live peacefully. White, black asian, hispanic, whatever."
>
> (Wolf)

This commenter's effort to post a second comment that contextualized "these people" as

"ANYONE…White, black, asian, hispanic, whatever," highlights the fact that the ideological

construct of whiteness as normal was already employed among the forty-one comments that

appeared in this opinion article interchange. The author seemed aware of how, in Evanston and

elsewhere, the public image of families who are "abnormal" – as indicated by the use of quote

marks around the word 'families' – and who "cannot raise their children" is linked to the

construct of blackness in popular thought.

    Errol Lawrence explains that "the family is a crucial site in the construction of racist

common-sense ideologies" ("Roots" 48) and cultural reproduction. Althusser tells us that young

people are 'squeezed' between the Family and the educational apparatus, in particular, during

their most formative years (i.e., kindergarten through grade 12 in the U.S.). Despite the coupling

of the School-Family apparatuses in popular discourse (e.g., to make parents accountable for

their children's educations), the Family remains an autonomous mechanism of the nation-state.

This autonomy makes it possible for the bourgeois elite to argue that the "cultural 'obstructions'

to 'fuller participation' in society are reproduced within black families by black people

themselves" (Lawrence "Roots" 113). In this sense, representations of families within the norm

and realm of whiteness (and tokenized families of color) are positioned as "normal" and

"natural" while families under the umbrella of blackness are reproduced into the egregious,

schizophrenic, and absurd pictures that Iton (197) so pointedly describes. This is not because

Black and Brown families *are* these things, but because, as Thompson tells us, the ideological

system of white privilege *requires* the devaluation of peoples under the umbrella of blackness.

This devaluation is evident in panic discourse on student achievement. One example can be

found in the comment section of a *Patch* article written about a school board member candidate's

opinion that de-tracked courses at ETHS were not helping "minority"[37] students:

> **Jim February 20, 2013 at 09:04 AM**
>
> "What would help? How about two parent families with a love for and appreciation of learning and discipline instilled in children. Parents who read aloud every day to pre-schoolers. Books, papers and magazines in the house. Little if any TV. Discussion at the dinner table. Learning to read music and/or playing an instrument. Insisting on a quiet environment for homework. A reasonable diet in a balanced, moral atmosphere. All of that is doable without a lot of money. The technocratic approach will not work but saying that it will is the easy way out for the education "experts". Reading and analysis of what is read is the key and if the foundation for that is not in place by the 3rd grade, remediation in high school is night impossible."
>
> (Chang "Mixed ETHS Classes")

This commenter's narrative reproduces anti-black common sense logic that young people of

color are raised in single-parent homes that lack discipline and have no appreciation of

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[37] Interestingly, despite their majority standing in ETHS, Black and Brown youth are persistently constructed as "minority" students in popular discourse.

education, culture, music, healthy diets, morality, and interpersonal communication. Through

this comment Black Diasporic families and their children are (re)imagined for popular

consumption as 'naturally' pathological and positioned as *the* barrier to their own fuller

participation in society. Ironically, what the commenter is actually pointing to here is that the

meaningful practices and rituals of Black Diasporic parents are counter-hegemonic and do not

subscribe to the master narrative. In this sense, the commenter is expressing white anxiety over

the marginal subjects' abilities to *refuse*, at some level, the capitalist relations of exploitation and

destabilize the ideological notions of nearly every state apparatus through which the commenter

appears to be deeply imbedded: the family, education, culture, communications, politics, and so

on.

The devaluation of families of color is also evident in panic discourse on topics of school

safety and crime as highlighted in the following comment:

> **Festus McMoron June 12, 2013 at 04:00 pm**
>
> "…everyone of these thugs has a parent. they are living under someone's roof. it starts and stops with these thugs homelife. their parents have to start being parents. i know they've done squat for the first 18 years. i'm afraid for myself and my family living in evanston. these thugs are not stopping at anything now. knifing a dad at 8 in the morning? evanston patch should change it's name to evanston crime report."
>
> (Fisher "Shots Fired")

According to this commenter, the answer to halting the reported increase of crime in Evanston is

to 'reform' the parents who have been inadequate in raising decent and moral citizens. Public

images are used to identify the criminals as Black males ('thugs') and to locate the origin of

criminal behavior in the Black home ('starts and stops with…homelife'). Conversely, the

reaction by readers to an article about a "sexting" incident that involved mostly White male

youths at ETHS who allegedly sent explicit images of female classmates to unknown recipients

without the girls' permission is quite different, as highlighted in one commenter's post:

Greg May 24, 2013 at 05:13 PM

> "Tragedy. Probable outcome [for the boys] will be charges of child pornography. If that happens and they are convicted, they will have to register as sex offenders for life. Parents cannot teach this if they are unaware of the law. The school districts must teach this to parents and children starting at a young age. I pray this outcome does not happen." (Fisher "Sexting Investigation at ETHS")

Here the moral panic is not in relation to the alleged sexting incident itself, but rather, it is about the damaging and tragic punishment that the baseball players might face.

In the Evanston community, baseball is known to be a sport for mainly White players in popular frames of reference. Photos in the school's yearbook confirm that the team consists of players who appear to be mostly White males. Thus, the commenter creates a narrative that positions the parents of White male youth (and thus the White male youths themselves) as victims of their own ignorance. Common-sense logic positions the school as the guilty party for failing to impart the proper ideological training of the good/moral citizen that would have undoubtedly protected these young White males – who are not abnormal, monstrous, or criminal in popular discourse – from any alleged crime. In this sense, the ideology of white male supremacy fixes White male youths as *naturally* innocent and 'decent,' and positions the school, which, of course, serves mostly students of color, as the failed institution and origin of where the pathological behavior was acquired. Thus, the White family unit remains normalized in popular thought through a constructed image of civility, morality and privileged culture.

As my analysis of these mediated representations of blackness demonstrates, young people of color, their families, and their communities are pathologized through *fixed*, stereotyped common-sense imagery that is lodged in popular ideologies of crime and punishment. Hall and his partners noted that "when the journalist, or the judge, or the members of the ordinary public have to respond to, or explain events, like 'mugging', they tend to draw, often in a piecemeal and

unreflexive manner, on the social images, the 'ideas of society', the sources of moral

anxiety…which frame their everyday experiences" (166). The scholars explain that ideological

systems like "common sense" are used to assign meaning to a troubling event such as gun

violence, particularly when the event threatens the very fabric of society (Hall et al. 166). This

ideological framework helps establish some type of *control* over what feels like seemingly

'random' acts of violence, in an attempt to restore "the rational 'order of things understood' –

things we can work on, do something about, handle, manage" (Hall et al. 166). In this sense, the

Patch article commenters attempt to reestablish order amidst these socially constructed moral

panics by offering three possible, manageable solutions: remove the potential Black male

menaces (and their families) from the Evanston community via academic displacement,

incarceration – or death. Thus, moral panics on gap discourses (*who* is failing), school safety

(*who* are the potential menaces and potential victims), and community violence (*who* is re-

producing the potential criminals) help fuel and refuel the larger crisis on education that

rationalizes the use of control cultures in schools.

Defining a school's "spirit": a look at organizational culture and power

Until this point, I have described how the articulation of ideology is visible in popular

discourse on education. I have explained how racist common-sense logic works both *outside of*

and *through* ideological state apparatuses such as the media to organize the educational crisis

that shakes the School-Family pairing and positions particular bodies as 'criminal' or 'failures'

in popular thought. Now I wish to address my questions about how school cultures – shaped

through an anti-black framework – are structured to regulate and destroy subaltern identities

through assimilationist efforts. Specifically, I attempt to answer several questions. How does the

construct of whiteness hold such power in U.S public school cultures, particularly across color

and class lines in seemingly liberal schools where students of color are the majority? To what extent has the nation-state influenced school cultures of control throughout American history? How does a school's culture wield such a grip on school agent, parents and students and in what ways does this lead to their consent to – and mobilization of – white-privileging mechanisms?

Students and school employees alike spend a minimum of 35 hours per week immersed in a school environment. Each day, schools convey dominant cultural values to students and staff through daily routines and discursive practices. During my new staff orientation session at the high school, for example, various school leaders presented the essential rules, guidelines and organizational traditions that would inform my day-to-day practices as a school employee. In addition to what I considered to be standard new hire information, I was introduced to the school's 'rich tradition' and 'spirit' through a discussion around the mission and vision statements, a barrage of achievement data and extracurricular highlights, and the revealing of symbolic cultural modes such as the school's mascot, school colors, and fight song.

Since then I have participated in the planning of numerous school orientation events for students and parents that follow a similar framework: school leaders use ceremonies to tell compelling stories and highlight tradition, rituals, and symbols to display the school's common values. For instance, at orientation school leaders repeatedly communicate to new families and staff that academic prowess is part of the high school's culture by declaring, "ETHS is in the top 2% of all public schools in the nation!" and highlighting the increase of students – particularly students of color - taking rigorous Advanced Placement (AP) courses and scoring historically high marks on AP test scores. Throughout the school building banners are hung in common spaces to display outstanding student achievement in national contests and competitions in math and science, for example. Other banners, created by the school itself, serve a more material

purpose of explicitly communicating the school's core values to its visitors and organization

members. These include banners with phrases that celebrate the school's "Rich tradition of

excellence," transmit behavioral expectations such as "Respect for self, others, and community,"

or communicate the school's motto, "It's a great day to be a Wildkit!" Through these discursive

practices and cultural artifacts, new employees, students and their families are indoctrinated with

the essential elements of the school's culture from the time of arrival.

My experience in school communications has revealed how the notion of school culture is

generally thought of in a practical sense, where "culture" is *fixed*, something that schools *have*

and a rational mechanism that school leaders can control. Terrence Deal and Kent Peterson

provide just such a conceptualization of school culture in their book entitled, "The Shaping

School Culture Fieldbook":

> "Every aspect of a school is shaped, formed, and molded by underlying symbolic elements.
> Although not all cultural aspects are easily shaped by leaders, over time, leadership can have a
> powerful influence on emerging cultural patterns. Being reflective can help leaders begin the
> process of reinforcing cultural patterns that are positive and transforming those that are negative
> or toxic" (Deal and Peterson 10).

Deal and Peterson continue on to say that all organizations, including schools, "*improve*

performance by fostering a shared system of norms, folkways, values and traditions" (11)

(emphasis mine). They argue that these cultural practices – specifically the institutional rituals,

traditions, norms and values – "infuse an enterprise with passion, purpose and a *sense of spirit*"

(emphasis added), and that without a strong, positive culture, "schools flounder and die" (Deal

and Peterson 11).

At ETHS, this notion that a school's spirit is directly linked to its livelihood can be seen in

the popular phrase, "I bleed orange and blue." By chanting this phrase at sports events or printing

it on t-shirts and stickers to wear, organization members (students, staff, alumni) indicate that

their love for the institution is so deep it flows through their veins, and, upon being wounded – no doubt in an effort to protect the school's 'good/moral' image and underlying culture – they will literally bleed the school's colors. This conceptualization of culture encourages school leaders to rely on methods that reinforce cultural hegemony in order to shape the school's culture and the ways in which organization members develop their sense of identity.

Interestingly, the essential aspects of school culture are not that different from what Deal and Allen Kennedy (13-15) describe as the fundamental elements of strong *corporate* cultures: the importance of the business environment/marketplace, values, heroes, rites and rituals, and cultural network. Like corporate cultures, schools in the U.S. are also shaped by marketplace factors such as local/national competition, school reform and privatization as we can see by the school actions taking place in the Chicago Public School system. Similar to profit-minded companies, schools utilize mission and vision statements, themes and slogans, and provide definitions of 'success' to communicate their values. Schools lift up heroes such as founding leaders, the principal or other school leaders, and most visibly cherish a school mascot. Rites and rituals are transmitted in schools via daily discursive practices, recognition activities or ceremonies, orientation and matriculation practices. And as I mentioned earlier in this chapter, school communities have thick cultural networks, propelled by the media and through various word of mouth networks, local knowledge and folklore that exist among students, parents, alumni, school employees and retirees, and the community at large. In addition, Deal and Kennedy (141-43) make a case that symbolic corporate managers – just like school leaders – can use their "native intuition and judgment" and "conventional wisdom" coupled with modern management practices to shape their organization's respective culture. This conceptualization portrays a manager's power and leadership abilities as "natural," positions organizational members as innately subordinate, and situates wisdom as common sense.

Yet organizational cultures are not 'fixed' nor are they shaped solely through specific rituals, traditions, norms and values. Scholars agree that organizations are constructed entities, sustained and transformed by both outside and internal forces (Hall et al. 201; Deetz 122; Apple 184-85). Specifically, Stanley Deetz describes that existing organizations are "social-historical constructions that are intrinsically interrelated with the larger social, historical, and economic forces of the society(ies)/culture(s) of which they are a part" (122). In this sense, corporate culture – and I argue school culture – is not simply a hegemonic structure where the ruling elite is guaranteed control over subaltern individuals and groups. Instead, corporate cultures are *constantly negotiated* worlds that are bounded by common sense and shaped through the embodiment of – and resistance to – ruling ideas in the dominant institutional order.

This perspective situates "culture" as a site where the struggle over hegemony occurs. It also positions marginalized groups *within* the framework of the ideological center but does not *completely* erase their autonomy and ability to resist, refuse, or remix traditional world views through their own defensive culture (Hall et al. 154). What we see in corporate cultures, then, is what Hall and his colleagues (155) call the *pragmatic acceptance* of the hegemonic order by marginalized groups. This acceptance represents a reluctant confirmation of hegemony itself – a "negotiated truce" that is necessarily contradictory (Hall et al. 155). Put another way, corporate cultures add a layer of contextualized decisions or *situated* judgments to the *general* ideas that are defined by hegemonic culture (Hall et al. 155). These situated judgments, or organizational decisions, work to conceal structured differences and harmonize cross-class alliances in an effort to produce consent among marginalized groups and promote ruling ideas in the dominant institutional order.

Those in power portray these organizational decisions as 'rational' and universally

beneficial in order to mobilize oppositional attitudes in support of ruling class interests. These

universally beneficial decisions are activated in organizational cultures through modern

management practices that *infuse* dominant ideology in institutional rituals, traditions, norms and

values as well as the mundane, ongoing organizational practices. Popular opinion circulated in

the media and through word of mouth reinforces the common-sense logic that propels dominant

ideological perspectives and, whether explicitly or implicitly stated, helps shape an

organization's culture, as well. Hegemony, then, is not cultivated from ideological articulation

alone, but rather, as James Lull argues, it *requires* reproduction in the everyday, routine activities

that occur in our "most basic social units – families, workplace networks, and friendship groups"

(62). Thus, hegemonic power structures are created and recreated *through* ideological assertions

produced through cultural practices that become the explicit, palpable cultural assumptions in an

organization.

The concept of school culture alone does not explain *how* the pragmatic acceptance of the

hegemonic order is maintained, particularly when school cultures in and of themselves do not

completely erase the autonomy of marginalized groups and individuals or their potential for

resistance. Here we must look at the notion of power in school cultures alongside Althusser's

concepts of the subject and the School. Dennis Mumby and Cynthia Stohl tell us that "power" –

as a 'deep structure' phenomenon – shapes the ways in which organization members develop

their sense of identity, "structuring fragmented interests into a coherent whole which maintains

certain relations of autonomy and dependence" (315). They argue that a particular hegemonic

social formation, such as the culture of a workplace or school, "is articulated through various

discursive practices which function ideologically to 'fix' meaning in a particular way" (Mumby

and Stohl 316). Through this framework "power" is viewed as both a coercive organizational

force and "a structured and relational feature of organizational life which frames both the identity formation and disciplining of organization members" (Mumby and Stohl 317).

Here the conception of power is not one of simple coercion, but rather, "as the process through which *consensual* social relations are articulated within the context of certain meaning systems" (Mumby and Stohl 316). Through our interpellation as *always already* subjects, we persistently "practice the rituals of ideological recognition, which guarantee for us that we are indeed concrete, individual, distinguishable and (naturally) irreplaceable subjects" (Althusser 172-73). In this sense, our acknowledgment that we are subjects and that we function in the mundane rituals, traditions, norms and values of the day-to-day only gives us the consciousness of our never-ending "practice of ideological recognition without the (scientific) knowledge of the mechanism of this recognition" (Althusser 173). It is the subjection of ideological power and the democratic *consensus* among the exploited around a common set of practical rituals – not the portrayal of power itself – that provides the conditions through which the nation or nation-state can operate.

Thinking about the School as one of the essential apparatuses that exists in American society makes it possible to imagine how a school's culture and systems of power are the structures through which ideological and repressive control occur. Borrowing from Althusser (140), the ideological practices that exist in schools (i.e., the rituals, traditions, norms and values) can most certainly survive political events that might affect the possession of institutional power (i.e., new administrators, a new principal, a change in school board members, etc.). This is because the control mechanisms that produce the fundamental relations of production in a capitalist regime "are naturally covered up and concealed by a universally reigning ideology of the School" (Althusser 157) and to a larger extent, the ruling bourgeois ideology. Indeed, while corporate

cultures have been popularly imagined as the vital for-profit core of capitalist reproduction, it is

actually the School that holds the chart-topping position for reproducing relations of production

on behalf of capitalism around the globe. Althusser explains how an essentialized notion of the

School is mobilized common-sense logic:

> "[The ruling bourgeois ideology] represents School as a neutral environment purged of ideology (because it is…lay), where teachers respectful of the 'conscience' and 'freedom' of the children who are entrusted to them (in complete confidence) by their 'parents' (who are free, too, i.e. the owners of their children) open up for them the path to the freedom, morality and responsibility of adults by their own example, by knowledge, literature and their 'liberating' virtues" (Althusser 156).

It is through this public image of the School that my naïveté about a role in school

communications – as a liberating, 'grassroots' mode of expression that is different from

corporate – was produced.

   This perspective helps us to understand *why* school employees, as *always-already* agents of

the American nation-state, might subscribe to the cultures of control that contain them and the

racially specific mechanisms that disproportionately target marginalized youth. In addition, the

socially-constructed perspective of the School as an ideologically-free environment helps us

conceptualize the structure in which students themselves – including those who are

disproportionately targeted – might consent to dominant ideas like the notion that "bleeding out"

one's school spirit will make them a *true* organization member. Thus, to borrow from Althusser

(157), the majority of my colleagues and I cannot even *begin* to comprehend the ideological and

repressive 'work' the system – which is bigger than we are and crushes us – forces us to do on a

day-to-day basis. Put differently, it is almost unbearable for educators to reflect on the fact that it

is our own heart and soul, our ingenuity and devotion to young people and to learning that

contributes to "the maintenance and nourishment of this ideological representation of the

School" (Althusser 157). Through the School-Family pairing, young people and their families

also face the unimaginable in terms of looking at their own subjectivities. However, by looking at concepts of culture, power, ideology and the School side-by-side, it is possible for us to start imagining the ideological conditions in which school agents, students and their parents are bound by dominant relations and subsequently accept the institution's common sense ideas as rational and universally beneficial. It is here that we can understand how school cultures of control can thrive.

School cultures of control: from the past to the present

In the context of public schools, power becomes a necessary process to consider in terms of *how* dimensions of social control are used to shape the ways in which organization members develop their sense of identity and consent to a school's – and nation's – cultural hegemony. Indeed, the U.S. government has used education as a mechanism to apply its "civilizing," "Americanizing," or "assimilationist mission" (Navarro-Rivera 227) on young people of color for more than 135 years. Pedro Navarro-Rivera's account of the Carlisle Indian Industrial School (CIIS)[38] in Carlisle, Pennsylvania provides important historical context on the origins of social control in U.S. schools. Between 1879 and 1918, nearly 11,000[39] Native American youths – and 59 young Puerto Ricans – were subjected to "one of the most ambitious experiments in the destruction of cultural identity and forced acculturation in United States history" at the Carlisle school (Navarro-Rivera 227). Navarro-Rivera explains how a process of 'reacculturation' – or "acculturation under duress"– was used to "grind down" the young among conquered peoples (225). The reacculturation process was achieved by "the integration and forced adaptation of students within the educational environment" (Navarro-Rivera 233). The Carlisle school, which

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[38] According to Navarro-Rivera (232), Carlisle Indian Industrial School was located on a former military base and operated through funding from the Federal government's "Civilization Fund" for the purpose of "civilizing" Indians.

[39] According to Navarro-Rivera (231), only 600 students graduated from the Carlisle Indian Industrial School.

operated through funding from the U.S. federal government's Civilization Fund (Navarro-Rivera 233) for the purpose of 'civilizing' indigenous peoples, provides us with an important historical context to understand how school cultures of control have been mobilized by the nation-state in an effort to produce the ideal 'American' national identity. The experiences at Carlisle reveal how power can operate as both a *coercive* organizational force and a conceptual framework through which *consensual* social relations are articulated.

According to Richard H. Pratt, the school's founder who had "dedicated his military career to fighting Indians" (232) prior to directing Carlisle for 25 years, the fundamental mission of Carlisle School was to "kill" the racial and cultural identities of Indian youths in order to "save the man" (Navarro-Rivera 225). The reacculturation process contained three important components: 1) vocational education; 2) the exposure of students to the dominant model of social and economic organization; and, 3) the strenuous imposition of Protestant principles (Navarro-Rivera 233). Through various discursive practices, Indian and Puerto Rican youth identities were shaped within a fixed meaning of what it meant to be an 'American' in a broad sense and a racialized subject in the U.S. who was economically, politically and legally disenfranchised, in particular. Carlisle school agents made immediate and persistent attempts to erase cultural and racial identities of new students by cutting their hair, dressing them in "civilized" clothing based on White European cultural norms, instituting an English-only policy that forbade vernacular languages, and assigning the students a new "Christian" name. (Navarro-Rivera 232). Federal officials instituted a curriculum that was designed "to advance the [Indian and Puerto Rican] pupils as speedily as possible to usefulness and citizenship" and make it possible for indigenous youth "to develop a higher level of morality, as well as become more patriotic and Christian citizens" (Navarro-Rivera 233).

School agents used a highly-structured school day schedule to regulate students' actions between the hours of 6:00am – 9:30pm each day (Navarro-Rivera 233). In fact, according to Genevieve Bell, whose thesis on the school is highlighted by Navarro-Rivera, students at Carlisle experienced constant surveillance, observation, and controlled socialization:

> "Students were subject to constant surveillance, both explicit and implicit. Most activities occurred under the watchful eye of teachers, wardens and peers who were prefects. They socialized in restricted areas, and associations between students from the same tribal/National group were actively discouraged. Dormitories, overseen by wardens, were arranged in such a way that students never roomed with someone from their home community or language group (1998: 2119)" (Bell as quoted in Navarro-Rivera 232).

Through this racist, ideological experimentation in education, the Carlisle School and others like it[40] were created to "educate" and acculturate youth who could be identified under the umbrella of blackness, establishing the foundation for what we now see as cultures of control in U.S. schools. Specifically, the Carlisle School, as a mechanism of the state, established an anti-black framework for the ongoing crisis around education in the U.S. and subsequent control mechanisms that "target, discipline, and criminalize people of color" in an effort to create and recreate "the ideological basis for a racialized nationalism and imperialism" (Bell as quoted in Navarro-Rivera 232).

Today, control mechanisms in public schools include many remnants of Carlisle's core components for observation and controlled socialization, such as scripted curricula, school rules and discipline policies rooted in dominant ideology, rigid schedules, and architectures of visibility and containment. In addition, contemporary control mechanisms include "high-stakes standardized testing and state/federal accountability measures, grades, zero-tolerance policies, on-site school resource officers (police officers), and surveillance devices to control student passage such as metal detectors, hall passes, and student ID cards with radio-frequency

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[40] Such as Hampton Institute in Virginia and the Tuskegee Normal School in Tuskegee, Alabama.

identification (RFID) chips." (Ferguson 49-50; 64-65; Lipman 161; Monahan and Torres 1-2; Apple 177-78). Like the phenomenon that led to the making of Carlisle School's control culture, control mechanisms in modern-day schools are rationalized through moral panics about academic achievement, school safety, and community violence. These panic discourses, created in the realm of public opinion and made active through the media, make and remake an education crisis; these discourses, – in conjunction with a larger organic crisis – regularly agitate the systems of the School and the Family to align with the advancements (of technology, of popular thought, of production needs, etc.) that occur in contemporary capitalist societies. Through this crisis, the School (and the School-Family pairing) are perpetually shaped and reshaped, altering its repressive and ideological modes of control and redefining the diversified skills and rights to consume required for "full citizenship and identity in the United States" as Grewal (30) explains.

Ideological anti-black imagery is lifted up through crisis discourse, linking themes of externality, pathology, and criminality to blackness in popular thought. In the realm of public education, this common sense white-privileging logic becomes the basis for decisions on school curriculum, policies and procedures. Ferguson's proposal that U.S. schools use a "hidden curriculum" to make and remake dominant ideology is one example of this. Similar to the federally-approved curriculum that was imposed on Indian and Puerto Rican youth at Carlisle School, this hidden curriculum perpetuates a school-wide ideology about the individual (in)abilities of particular subjects by intensifying the supposed inequalities youth bring from their

homes and communities to school. The result is an ideological process I refer to as *academic displacement.*[41]

Through an academic displacement framework, the School invokes racist public images of blackness – the inadequate family, criminal youth and deprived cultures – to justify the use of racially specific mechanisms (such as the tracking system) that disproportionality displace students of color in general, and Black males in particular, from the learning environment. Academic displacement, then, as a mechanism of social control targets youth – and specifically youth of color – who do not demonstrate their usefulness or desire for 'citizenship' in the school community and nation at large. Ultimately, the ongoing surveillance and policing by school agents results in the exact undesired behaviors that mechanisms of control were designed to provoke in peripheral subjects: resistance and refusal to comply (often coded by schools in subjective terms like "defiance of authority" or "inappropriate behavior"). The result is a nation-wide phenomenon where (mostly) male youths who can be identified as Black are disproportionately *removed* from the learning environment altogether via off-campus and "alternative" school placements, suspensions, and ultimately, expulsion.

Through these examples we can see how the application of control cultures in schools reinforces the theories of whiteness which assert that one's socially constructed identity – from the honors student to the frequent flyer – is believed to have come from *within* the subject versus something that is a result of cultural hegemony. This subjectivity also situates the parents and families of Black and Brown youth as 'dysfunctional' in popular thought and subject to policing

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[41] Here I use the concept of "academic displacement" to refer to the multitude of control mechanisms that are used in U.S. school systems to disproportionality displace students of color – and Black males in particular – from the learning environment. These mechanisms include disproportionate placement of Black male students in Special Education services due to undesired social behaviors; the disproportionate diagnosis of Black males with ADD/ADHD due to undesired social behaviors and the subsequent prescription of psychotropic medication to subdue these behaviors; the assignment of Black males to lower academic tracks via school tracking systems; the actions of school counselors to discourage students of color from taking certain college preparatory courses (i.e., Advanced Placement, honors level) for which they are qualified; and, disciplinary policies that result in a reduction of participation in instructional time for Black male students via suspensions and off-campus alternative placements, and ultimately expulsion.

and containment practices, as well. Hazel Carby agrees that the popular "portrayal of black parents as deficient, unable to equip their children to compete equally with white youth" (189) has been used to justify "increased state intervention to compensate for this supposed 'failure' on the part of black parents" (189). Through her fieldwork at a U.S. elementary school, Ferguson describes how school agents link the popular notion of 'bad Black boys' to the public image of 'dysfunctional' Black families. She noted that while searching for theories about why so many Black males were found in the school's "punishing room" – and in disciplinary rooms like it all across the U.S. – school agents overwhelmingly called upon pathological "images, representations, beliefs about family to theorize away school dilemmas and difficulties in dealing with youth: troublesome children come from troubled or troublemaking families" (Ferguson 41).

In this sense, popular conceptions of blackness perpetuated through the media and by the schools themselves position families under the umbrella of blackness as inherently marginal, pathological, and criminal. This construction of the pathological Black and Brown family was used during the Carlisle Industrial Indian School experience to police and contain families of Indian and Puerto Rican youths. In the case of Puerto Rico, because the U.S. government had identified the island as an economically and militarily important country following the establishment of colonial rule through conquest,[42] it determined that the "inferior beings" who inhabited the island "would need to be 'civilized' in order to maximize the potential benefits of the conquest" (Navarro-Rivera 226). As a result, government scholarships were provided to Puerto Rican youth to attend U.S. institutions such as Carlisle, Tuskegee, and Hampton (Navarro-Rivera 228). According to Bell, Carlisle parents had little choice in sending their

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[42] In 1898, nearly 20 years after the founding of Carlisle School, the U.S. established colonial rule through conquest over the people of Puerto Rico in an effort to bolster industrialization and "protect the American way of life" (Deitz 83). One of the first tactics used to advance U.S. interests in Puerto Rico was the establishment of a U.S. public school system on the island in 1898, followed by a Normal School for teacher education in 1900, which leveraged the U.S. model for the education of Indians and African-Americans (as cited in by Torres Gonzilez 2003) (Navarro-Rivera 227)

children to the Carlisle because those who resisted the directive to enroll their children faced "cessation of rations or other government benefits" (Bell as quoted in Navarro-Rivera 234). Thus, the government's portrayal of Puerto Rican parents as "inferior" and "uncivilized" was used to justify the forced assimilation and reacculturation efforts used on Puerto Rican youth. In the next section I will describe how these popularized pathologies of blackness have been mobilized at ETHS and the surrounding community through the normalization of whiteness in deliberate and ongoing efforts to protect the material and symbolic privileges of (mostly) White youth and their families.

The role and presence of whiteness in schools

Many schools champion a socially constructed image of individual determination to mobilize the common sense framework that there are few barriers to 'success' except one's own (in)abilities. In schools like ETHS where per pupil spending of $21,428[43] is well above the state and national average, this common sense logic is amplified in popular thought among educators and taxpayers alike who make the case that, because *all* students have access to a wealth of resources – more than 250[44] course offerings, world-class facilities, state-of-the art technology, and an array of reference materials on campus – *all* students are capable of achieving hegemonic standards of success. However, Ferguson (202) describes how this positioning of 'success' and 'failure' as a *personal choice* in popular discourse centers the norm and realm of whiteness and eclipses both the material and symbolic constraints that systematically prevent youth under the umbrella of blackness from succeeding. Material constraints in this sense include acts of academic displacement that deny mainly students of color access to the high school's most

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[43] This is the Operating Spending Per Pupil cost reported for 2013 on the interactive Illinois Report Card website. By comparison, the per pupil cost for high school students at Chicago Public Schools is $13,433. According to the site, this amount "includes all costs for overall operations in this school's district, including Instructional Spending, but excluding summer school, adult education, capital expenditures, and long-term debt payments available." Source: http://iirc.niu.edu/default.aspx.

[44] Source: 2012-13 ETHS school profile (http://www.eths.k12.il.us/assets/1/Documents/ETHSProfile_2013_14_final.pdf)

rigorous education, and, in times of punishment, suspension or expulsion, access to *any* education. Symbolic or social constraints, as Ferguson calls them, include the way in which ETHS is structured "to promote the dominant cultural values and expressive modes" (202) such as ideological conceptions of beauty or intelligence that privilege the high school's White student racial minority at the expense of the student of color majority.

Through the social construction of whiteness, this material and symbolic privileging of mainly White students[45] in education is normalized and the process through which it occurs is often invisible to school agents, students, parents, and the public at large. Audrey Thompson explains that whiteness provides the actual context for meaning-making by supplying "the norms and categories against which all groups are measured" (Thompson). Scholars agree that in the racialized setting of the U.S, the ideology of whiteness continually oppresses people of color as well as White people by situating White cultural values and relational styles, White 'American' histories, and White nationalisms as the generic or colorblind norm (Ferguson 202; Thompson; Bell 31). Derrick Bell explains how this normalization and favoring of whiteness creates a common sense logic among White people that, because a majority of the U.S. population is White and most power is held by Whites, as Whites, "they are privileged and entitled to preference over people of color" (31). Bell concludes that these views have solidified whiteness into a kind of property – conceived of as legal or cultural property according to Thompson – complete with laws that recognize and protect "this property right based on color like any other

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[45] As Audrey Thompson notes on her *Summary of Whiteness Theory* Web page, people of color can receive conditional benefits from white-privileging mechanisms. She states the following: "It is partly because whiteness can be extended to a few, 'deserving' people of color, that it remains invisible: it looks like a generic system that only *happens* to serve whites better, rather than one that systematically serves whites better. However, non-whites who benefit from white-privileging mechanisms are likely to do so more or less on probation: they may be constantly expected to demonstrate their worthiness, may be tokenized (not taken especially seriously but placed in visible positions to 'prove' that an organization is colorblind), and may be disenfranchised if they jeopardize their honorary whiteness (by, for example, demonstrating significant interest in or solidarity with other people of color).

property" (31). Whiteness as property is particularly visible when systems of power and privilege are threatened.

Popular discourse on student achievement in the Evanston school community shows us how the conception of whiteness as property works as an ideological force lifted up through cultural institutions of the state to maintain the symbolic and material white privilege and capitalist relations of exploitation deemed necessary by the U.S. nation-state. Responses made by several district equity assessment focus group participants highlight the invisibility of whiteness (and the associated power and privilege) among White people in Evanston, in particular. The respondents also point out how whiteness as an ideological mechanism works in a seemingly unregulated manner, protected by local politics, and how this *external* force directly impacts the day-to-day realities within the city's only public high school:

> "The school is run by the white community; they control it and elect the board. They always get their way. No one stands up to them and says, 'Stop – we're not going there.' It's about job security; you play the political game. School rules don't pertain to everyone" (Autrey and Cowdery 14).

> "The biggest barrier to closing racial achievement disparities is getting white people in the community to recognize they have been the benefactors of privilege. They are not able to address that" (Autrey and Cowdery 14).

These narratives provide critical insight for school leaders at ETHS (or any U.S. school) concerned with establishing social justice efforts to deconstruct the oppressive cultures of control that exist within their classrooms, corridors, and campuses. By looking at the ways in which whiteness as a social construct works as an often-invisible and well-protected control mechanism in all cultural institutions – the School, the Family, politics, law, education, media – educators can have a better grasp of the complexities, contingencies, and contestations of whiteness. This perspective is especially critical when school leaders attempt to deconstruct the deeply embedded symbolic and material white privilege that exists within their institutions.

For example, the tracking[46] system is a control mechanism employed in U.S. schools to oppress students of color and students from lower socio-economic status households of all intellectual ability levels. At comprehensive high schools across the country, tracking results in a series of rigorous top-tier courses reserved for mostly White and wealthy students – sometimes despite their academic ability to be in those courses – while their Black and Brown and poorer counterparts are placed into lower-level academic tracks. In 2010, school leaders at ETHS decided to propose a disruption of the tracking system at the freshman level and establish a more representative, comprehensive learning experience that would provide students of all races with access to the most rigorous level of humanities. What we did not anticipate was the instant *hypervisibility* of whiteness and the quick assertion of white privilege via pubic dissent, angry emails and letters, formal petitions to delay the decision, critical news stories and editorials, oppositional blog posts and comments, and the threat of legal action that occurred in response to the proposal and subsequent approval by the Board of Education to proceed with detracking efforts.

The detracking debate began only three months after I was hired as the communications director, and, despite having lived in Evanston prior to working at ETHS, I had not yet established a true sense of the city's racialized history nor the politics and power that played into sustaining the racist structure and systems of privilege in the high school. This limited knowledge would prove to be a significant disadvantage throughout the debate. Once the detracking concept was announced to the general public a moral panic about student

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[46] For the purpose of this paper I will use the definition of tracking provided by Mary Hatwood Futrell and Joel Gomez (75): "*tracking* historically refers to the practice of grouping high school students by ability into a series of courses with differentiated curriculums; students take high-, middle-, or low-level courses related to the track they have selected or been assigned to (academic, general, or vocational)…Efforts to detrack the system have met strong resistance (Hallinan, 2004; Oakes, Wells, Jones, & Datnow, 1997)…Some of that resistance comes from stakeholders who want to protect the privileged place their children enjoy in the current system (McKerrow, 1997)… for more than five decades, ability grouping has resulted in the separation of students by race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status. Many studies have confirmed that minority and low-income students of all ability levels are over-represented in the lower tracks and underrepresented in the higher tracks (Ascher, 1992; Burris & Welner, 2005; Oakes & Guiton, 1995; Wyner, Bridgeland, & DiIulio, 2007)."

achievement was created. Fueled by (mostly) White parents, alumni, school retirees, news

reporters, and the community at large, a popular claim that the school was losing its competitive

edge to benefit students of color arose rapidly. Parents of the few 'deserving' students of color

who received conditional benefits from the tracking systems were also in an uproar, as the

system had seemingly worked to distinguish their Black or Black children from the school's

'inadequate' majority as highlighted in student achievement reports.

Panic discourses over ETHS's efforts to decenter whiteness in classrooms "drew state and

national attention" (Rado) and even prompted a barrage of letters and email messages addressed

to the school and school leaders written by concerned 'citizens' as well as people claiming to

have affiliations with white supremacy groups. By all popular accounts the high school was

ripping out its *entire* honors track[47] and decimating its tradition of academic excellence. In

various settings I would hear coded catch phrases accusing school administrators of "lowering its

standards" or "dumbing down the curriculum" to benefit students of color at the detriment of

White students. The crux of each news story, blog post, letter, email, petition, lawsuit, and public

comment was the representation of whiteness – and its cultural and legal property – as a

threatened status in Evanston and across the United States.

For instance, in a feature article titled, "Shortchanging the Best," a *Chicago Tribune* reporter

claimed that "racial balance [in the classroom] will take priority over academic rigor [at ETHS]"

(Chapman). Here the reporter highlights the popular perception that efforts to decenter whiteness

would only benefit students of color while diminishing the rigorous educational experiences of

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[47] The majority of the "detracking" panic was fueled by *deliberate* misinformation fed to parents, community members and the media by privileged stakeholders who felt threatened by this systemic change and the potential impact of white privilege. The restructuring of freshman level courses provides *all* incoming students who test above reading level – and the *majority* of students do – the opportunity to earn honors-level credit in their humanities (and subsequently biology) classes. Thus, honors credit is no longer a "given" for (mostly White) students enrolled in honors classes and a historic white-privileging mechanism is decentered. Contrary to popular accounts that are still circulating four years later, the restructuring of the freshman year did not eliminate or even reduce the high school's rigorous curricular offerings. To date, the high school offers [27] Advanced Placement courses and honors-level credit can be earning 132 courses. (Source: ETHS School Profile).

White students. Another *Tribune* reporter inserted the parent voice into the detracking panic, explaining that, "[a]mong other concerns, parents felt top-performing students could be bored or held back in classes that cater to the abilities of a wide range of students" (Rado). These news stories, through their racist structure, mobilize discourses of white victimage to position whiteness as a threatened status that is under siege by Black and Brown bodies. In this sense, these media accounts advocate for white privilege, which, according to Thompson, depends heavily on the *devaluation* of people of color. Returning to the point made by Hall and his colleagues, racist imagery of "inadequate," "criminal" and "culturally deprived" students of color was necessarily evoked in panic discourse by those in power when additional analysis of the tracking system would threaten dominant ideological power structures. Through the normalization of whiteness, public images of 'top-performing' and academically motivated students at ETHS were constructed as inherently White, with their privileges threatened by the majority of the school's students, positioned as deficient and inadequate against the invisible norm.

In addition to media accounts, the hypervisibility of whiteness also appeared in public opinion. A local blogger who describes herself as a "Chicago-area Social Media Mom" further articulates the normalization of whiteness and its threatened status via a blog entry titled, "Evanston High School Denies Gifted Children Opportunities":

> "[Detracking is] all being done in the name equal opportunity, of course. When I mentioned the cancellation of the honors humanity course to a friend, the cynical reply was, 'Not enough black students in the honors class?'"

> (Moldofsky)

This panic discourse highlights how the disruption of hegemonic "whites only" classroom structures in the name of equal opportunity and racial balance is viewed as the first step in

deconstructing *all* of the institutional systems of power that have privileged the dominant culture

to this point. Interestingly, the blogger then lifts up the local attack on white privilege to the

national front by concluding that, "…sadly, our nation's guiding education policy focuses on

bringing up the bottom, rather than annual yearly academic progress for all students. So

shudder this de-tracking thing could catch on" (Moldofsky).

Following the Board's approval of the school's detracking efforts, media accounts and

public opinion on the matter continued with claims that White residents were leaving Evanston

via a massive "white flight" movement as a result. As the *Chicago Tribune* reported, "Parents are

threatening to yank their kids from the high school and mount legal challenges against the

[freshman humanities] decision. They believe, with good reason, that their children will be

shortchanged" (Chapman). By decoding this statement through theories of whiteness as property,

we can determine that white flight panic discourse was mobilized by Evanston parents of mainly

White youth. In the comments section of a community-specific news website, *Evanston Now*,

one public commenter directly linked the school's detracking decision to the supposed exodus of

White residents:

> **Submitted by Anonymous Al (not verified) on March 15, 2011 - 11:11am**
>
> "Indeed, I have to my shock talked to three parents in the past month who have put their homes on the market because they told me they want their kids out of the Evanston school system and don't want to pay the increasing taxes all because of the freshmen honors detracking issue."
>
> (Smith)

Racist common sense logic is perpetuated by the commenter, who expresses "shock" over the

school's decision to privilege the majority of its students – young people of color. The standard

family, here, is coded as *the* homeowners and taxpayers of Evanston in popular frames of

references and possesses a potential economic impact for the city's capitalist structure as implied

by lost revenue and tax dollars. This cultural production of white anxiety and positioning of

whiteness as a threatened status that can be detrimental to the community at large remains highly visible in my interactions and conversations with colleagues, parents, community members, and visitors of ETHS. "Tell me more about freshman humanities," has become the popular question at the high school.

As word of mouth discourse perpetuates the anti-black logic that ETHS "dummies down" its curriculum to benefit students of color, very few have reflected on the benefits of detracking for *all* students; this includes White youth's liberation from the ideological oppression of whiteness itself. I have heard many accounts about the destructive impact of whiteness on White youth, including the constant pressure to reach hegemonic measures of success in order to maintain what Ferguson explains as the standard by which "individuals" are measured (202). Indeed, there is a powerful loneliness felt in the realm of the individual vs. the possibilities of the collective. Stories about White students piling up seven or eight Advanced Placement college-level courses during their junior years and then succumbing – rightfully so – to the insurmountable pressure are not uncommon. In highly competitive school settings such as ETHS, the expectation for perfection is visible in the performances of many White youth. Because of the invisible and unremarkable nature of whiteness, White youth are always already interpellated as subjects who inflict these ideological acts of containment on themselves and on others without questioning "who" actually benefits from the hegemonic structure of whiteness and "why." In addition, the normalization and naturalization of whiteness makes it possible for all parents to accept, and, to some extent even advocate for, the racially specific mechanisms that protect the privileged place that White youth enjoy in the current educational system while simultaneously monitoring and containing all youths within it. Thus, there is a critical need for young people and adults alike to reflect on the ways in which whiteness as the standard in school culture creates a framework

through which dominant ideology is perpetuated and control mechanisms are mobilized to oppress White youth as well as their Black and Brown peers.

Taking this a step further, the invisibility of whiteness makes it difficult for many school adults and parents to see control cultures as anything but *rational* and *universally beneficial* for students of all races. Through my experiences as a White woman parenting a young man of color, the insidious nature of racism coupled with my own privilege of whiteness made it difficult to recognize the ways in which control cultures in schools are used to police and contain my son, our family and myself. During my earlier years as a parent I subscribed to the popular color-blind attitude that distinctions of race were not significant in contemporary education beyond the use of it as "the baseline category for classifying and distributing kids throughout the system and into classrooms" (Ferguson 17). I believed the school officials who assured me that racism was no longer prevalent in education, that my child would receive an equitable learning experience in an environment that honored "diversity." I soaked up the rhetoric from educators who perpetuated the common narrative that "racial discrimination had come to an end with school desegregation" (Ferguson 17). Like many White Americans, I had never considered what Bell explains is the "involuntary racial sacrifice" (26) required of young people of color to attend racially integrated schools and navigate systems designed to target and contain them. I failed to question the common-sense racist logic that prevailed in public opinion, in the media and in the schools my son attended because this ideological perspective positioned me – a White woman raised by White parents in the U.S. – to be a 'naturally' *effective* parent, equipped with the diversified skills to prepare my Black teenage son with the tools he needed to be a 'successful,' academically competitive and socially well-adapted youth. Whiteness as a social construct privileges my White racialized body despite my peripheral identities as a woman, as a product of

poor living conditions and an ill-equipped rural educational system, and as a single mother who

once received WIC[48] and other government assistance and lived in Section 8 housing.

Yet my interactions with educators, social service professionals, the police, and the general

public over the past sixteen years has informed me that the same mechanisms that privilege my

White racialized body actively work to perpetuate the deeply entrenched racism in U.S. schools,

and in the neoliberalizing construct of 'America' to a much larger extent, that seeks to oppress

youth of color like my son. For example, the coded language used in a progress report issued by

my son's fourth grade teacher highlighted her perception of my son's performance in the

classroom:

> "[Your son's] gentle spirit and warm smile are both welcome additions to our classroom;
> however, his time management and personal responsibility issues continue to negative impact his
> educational experience in general and his academic performance in particular…In math, while
> he had a difficult time grasping and applying the fraction and area concepts of our last two units,
> [your son] passed our most recent curriculum-based mathematics assessment with a 100%. As is
> abundantly clear by this discrepancy, there is a disconnect between [your son's] *potential* ability
> and his *daily* performance; simply put, he is obviously capable of higher academic achievement"
> (Teacher).

The teacher, who self identifies as a biracial woman, appears to make an intentional effort to

counter the popularized image of the young Black male criminal in her opening line. She creates

an image of my son as displaying a culturally acceptable ('welcome addition to our classroom')

performance of Black masculinity ('gentle spirit', 'warm smile').

Yet in the same sentence she inserts a *different* common-sense image of the Black male

deviant by stressing my nine-year-old son's supposed inability ('personal responsibility issues')

to adhere to key norms within society ('time management', 'higher academic achievement').

Despite my son's clear display of content knowledge via scoring a 100 percent on the

standardized test, the teacher's narrative (re)produces a racist public image of the inadequate

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[48] Here I am referring to The Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC).

young Black male ('difficult time grasping and applying' concepts, '*potential* ability' vs. '*daily* performance'); this public image works to contain my son, and other(ed)s like him, within a popular conceptualization of Black masculinity – the criminal and/or the endangered species. Through these two cultural images, Ferguson tells us, Black children's behavior is "adultified" (83) by school adults and "their transgressions are made to take on a sinister, intentional, fully conscious tone that is stripped of any element of childish naïveté" (83).

As a parent I have observed how this concept of "adultification" is lifted up through American nationalist discourse, where representations of *potentially* deficient or deviant future workers and producers are weeded out through acts of academic displacement. Since my son began the first grade, parent teacher conferences have been a site where educators repeat three racially specific control mechanisms coded as "solutions" of the School-Family pairing. These control mechanisms acted as an effort to police my parenting and assimilate my son in, or eventually displace him from, the respective school's learning environment. First, educators at parent teacher conferences always suggest to me (sometimes more than once) that my son should see the school social worker to work on his 'personal responsibility issues' and other 'pathological' tendencies that are popularly assumed to arise out of households with missing Black fathers. Once I even had a teacher imply that I should institute more drastic forms of physical discipline at home to make up for the loss of a prominent male figure at home. Next, I typically receive one or two recommendations from educators at conference to speak with a family doctor for the purpose of exploring the use of psychotropic medication for ADD or ADHD to control my son's 'distractibility', 'fidgeting' and 'attention issues,' marked as undesired social behaviors. And finally, at least one educator will conclude the conference by questioning if I had ever considered Special Education services despite the fact that my son had never been diagnosed with any physical or intellectual needs to receive such services.

Derrick Bell tells us that within dominant ideological thought in education, "whites are presumed competent until they prove the contrary…[and] blacks are assumed to be mediocre, and certainly no intellectual match for smart whites, until their skills and accomplishments gain them an often reluctant acceptance" (31). From this perspective the social construction of pathological images of blackness are used by schools to contain and police me, my child, and our family. In the anti-black framework that exists in American nationalist discourse there is no alternate image of family, youth, or community through which my son as a bearer of blackness and myself as his White mother can be imagined. Through the adultification of my son at an early age to the subsequent academic displacement attempts that have been suggested at every step of his educational journey, we have been treated as though we needed to be "fixed or removed" from the School often through the ideological construct of the Family. My son is simply a signifier of Black masculinity in popular thought, and, because I gave birth to him– to a child who represents socially constructed pathological images of blackness – my role as a parent is heavily scrutinized and policed. In this sense, it is the parents' roles in replenishing the Black race – through birth or conception – that renders their family unit dysfunctional in popular thought and in need of extraordinary solutions.

Based on my experiences as a White woman, a parent of a young man of color, and a colleague of many educators of every race, I argue that all school agents are contained within a politics of whiteness that requires them to teach and administer education in a manner that maintains white-privileging mechanisms and bolsters the dominant ideology of the U.S. Indeed, the comments from my son's fourth grade teacher highlight how whiteness as a construct informs educators of _all_ races about an institution's acceptable norms for teaching and classroom/school culture. In this sense racist common sense logic informs theories of whiteness and does not allow for any alternate _possibilities_ when it comes to educating, parenting, or being

Black and Brown youth in the U.S., even when the logic itself is contradictory. In spite of the inherent privilege assigned to my White racialized body through the normalization of whiteness, socially constructed pathologies about blackness *insert* both my son and I into the image of a dysfunctional family in popular thought. Scholars agree that whiteness depends on the "practical devaluation" of blackness and Black cultures (Hall et al. 340; Ferguson 202; Thompson). This devaluation is especially visible in schools where students of color are the majority because the notion of a White student minority positions whiteness as a threatened status. Despite the racial identities and cultures of the students who make up the majority in these schools, the institutions remain White (Hall et al. 340). By examining the role and presence of whiteness in mostly non-White schools we can begin to understand how students of color are historically and disproportionately excluded from images of success compared to their White counterparts. In the next chapter I will take a closer look at the making of one such school.

Chapter 3: Deconstructing a 'Rich Tradition of Excellence'

Evanston Township High School is a public high school in Evanston, Illinois, a suburb of

Chicago; it serves the city of Evanston and a small portion of the neighboring village of Skokie

for a total district population of approximately 78,000. Established in 1883, ETHS is the only

public high school in Evanston and is one of the few suburban public high schools of its kind in

terms of demographic representation. With a total enrollment of 3,120 students, 17 percent of the

student population is Hispanic/Latin@, 31 percent of the students are Black,[49] 43 percent are

White, and five percent identify as two or more races. The remaining five percent is comprised

of American Indian, Asian, and Native Hawaiian students. Similar to public high schools in the

Chicagoland area, the majority of the teaching population and administration at ETHS is White.

Unlike many of the suburban public high schools in the area, nearly half, or 41 percent of the

student households are considered low income based on their qualification for free or reduced

lunch.[50] While poverty exists in the community, the school is not constrained by low funding and

has carried a balanced budget with only minor cuts to the educational program over the past six

years. Affectionately dubbed "E-Town" due to the school's massive 62-acre campus and its

demographic representation of the Evanston community at large, ETHS has a long-standing

reputation for 'excellence' in education.

A review of the school's promotional materials reveal ETHS's top rankings in the state and

in the nation,[51] as well as its student's high marks on standardized tests and in academic

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[49] In Evanston and at ETHS, there is a large representation of Black Diasporic peoples from countries in Africa and the West Indian and Caribbean nations of Belize, Haiti, and Jamaica, in particular. In general, students and their families from these countries do not have an affinity for the U.S. race category, "African American." The word "Black" has been used throughout this paper to isolate race while honoring the multiple Black American and Black Diasporic identities found in the ETHS school community.

[50] Source: www.eths.k12.il.us/about/.

[51] In 2013, Evanston Township High School was ranked #15 in the state of Illinois by The Washington Post, and #18 in Illinois by U.S. News & World Report. Source: www.eths.k12.il.us/about/.

competitions.[52] The school's racial and economic diversity, coupled with the commonly used tagline, "Equity. Excellence. One School." presents Evanston's only public high school as a 'progressive, post-racial' community – a reflection of Evanston's well-marketed diversity and 'liberal' politics. By all popular accounts, ETHS is known to produce highly competitive, well skilled, racially conscious, liberal thinkers, who are prepared to succeed in global, multicultural markets. On the GreatSchools.org website, for example, one parent posted a review of the school in 2006 claiming that recruiters from universities and colleges across the U.S. "loved seeing applicants from ETHS, because they knew the incoming student would arrive academically prepared, and due to ETHS's diversity, have no problem assimilating into the college social body" (GreatSchools.org). In fact, this popularized image of Evanston as a "classic town" with exceptional youth has been around since the school's inception. According to one documented account from an 1887 graduate, "the principal [of ETHS] at first permitted unusual freedom to Evanston students under the impression that they were of so high a caliber that they needed fewer restraints than most teen-agers" (Davis and Hach 184).

But a review of historical texts and counter narratives on Evanston and ETHS reveals that this neoliberal dream is only a reality for some. Discourses about ETHS underscore how the school's history of racism excluded all groups outside the norm and realm of whiteness from benefiting from the school's so-called 'rich tradition' of academic excellence. Liane Clorfene, a scholar following the trends at ETHS in the mid-to-late 1970s, wrote that, "Many white parents believe that [ETHS's] academic standards have been lowered to accommodate low-achieving blacks. Many black parents feel that the school's track system of ability-grouping and the selection process in after school activities function to create segregated schools under the same

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[52] See the ETHS "Fast Facts & Highlights" sheet (http://www.eths.k12.il.us/documents/default.aspx?CategoryId=118) and also the ETHS reports on student achievement (http://www.eths.k12.il.us/documents/default.aspx?CategoryId=32).

roof"(18). A similar viewpoint was highlighted in a 2009 review on GreatSchools.org, where one parent stated: "ETHS is a good school for advanced kids, but there are not very good opportunities for 'average' students. We also found that the school was very racially divided" (GreatSchools.org). Another parent emphasized the school's academic disparities across racial lines in a 2011 review on the same website: "The school is very racially segregated right now. You see mostly white kids in AP [Advanced Placement] classes and mostly black kids in Special Ed classes" (GreatSchools.org). In this sense Evanston's only public high school is an important site to explore to understand what constitutes the struggle over hegemony in the Evanston community.

Unpacking the 'crisis'

I was hired in June 2010[53] to run the two-person communications office at Evanston Township High School. My immediate charge from the superintendent was to examine past communication practices and technologies that had traditionally benefited some of the members in the school community – mainly White students and their families – and disregarded others. I hired someone who had both the professional and critical capacity to help me (re)define these practices and modes of communication as well as the theoretical framework of this space.[54] We started to ask, *who* is allowed to define knowledge, produce it, decide how it is produced, and determine the method of its dissemination? In what ways has the dominant ideological discourse of the institution and the community at large maintained a legacy of white privilege and White male supremacy? How have dimensions of power *within* and *outside* of the school shaped a culture of control that has led to the academic displacement of *specific* students? I began to

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[53] The previous Director of Communications (titled "Director of Public Affairs/Alumni) was in that position for 24 years. She is a proud alumna of ETHS.

[54] After an open application and interview process, I hired a graduate student from DePaul who not only had the professional qualifications in marketing and communications, but who was immersed in critical communication studies work as part of the Organizational and Multicultural Communications program. She worked with me for one year and was integral to this initial work.

answer these questions by having informal conversations with adults from all spaces and levels within the organization and by reviewing historical documents and books on the history of Evanston and ETHS.

Next, I established a systematic review of all written and visual communications that were distributed by the district, analyzed events hosted by the school, and observed school leader's public performances and discourses – What was the popular narrative? Who was the audience and who was visibly missing? How did the school define and celebrate 'success'? How did it talk about its challenges? Which actors were particularly and persistently challenging in the master narrative? I reviewed local media accounts and analyzed public opinion, as highlighted in Chapter 2, to deconstruct the education crisis, in general, and critique moral panics about student achievement and school safety more specifically. After reviewing a multitude of school communication and historical documents, observing the traditions, values, heroes, rites and rituals of the school, listening to school and community master narratives and personal narratives within Evanston's thick cultural network, and analyzing popular panic discourse about the high school and its students, it became evident that ETHS, as with most modern-day schools in the U.S. following the *Brown v. Board* ruling, has systematically operated for nearly 130 years as two *separate* schools rooted in the ideology of whiteness where the symbolic and material advantages are reserved for mainly White students.

Since its opening in 1883, Evanston Township High School was touted as a space for racial integration via secondary education, providing an education to young people from every neighborhood in Evanston within one school building. Despite the prevalence of racially segregated institutions in the Evanston community at the time, a glimpse of Evanston's White

paternalism[55] appeared in town leaders' decision to establish a *single* high school that would be

open to youth from every racial/ethnic and socio-economic background in District 202

(Robinson Jr. 20, 61; Wiese 450). However, in the words of former superintendent Alan Alson,

the racism that pervaded all the other social and political realms in Evanston "virtually

guaranteed that the same expectations, curriculum, and quality of experience would not be

available to all [ETHS] students" (50). Popular accounts reveal how this history of racism in

ETHS positioned students outside the norm and realm of whiteness as the necessary Other to

help define the school's ideological image of the "All-American" (typically White) student.

Thus, since the high school's inceptions, students under the umbrella of blackness have been

denied access to symbolic and material privileges such as the school's "rich tradition of

excellence" that is touted on banners around the school building today.

Clorfene wrote the following analysis of the high school's racial dynamics in her 1977

article, "Giving Students a Chance: The Story of Evanston Township High School":

> "The black students, as a group, are not doing as well as the whites, and it would be foolish to
> suggest otherwise. But for many years Evanston High chose to ignore the disparity, or, rather, to
> take it for granted and institutionalize the situation in a tracking system that effectively
> segregated the "dumb" (black) students from the "smart" (white) students. There were always
> exceptions to this rule, but by and large the system functioned to protect highly-motivated,
> superachieving white: from being "held back" by attending class with blacks indifferent to
> learning and achievement. By the same token, however, black students coming to Evanston from
> the suburb's segregated elementary schools (they were integrated only in 1968 during the liberal
> direction of then Superintendent Coffin) were frozen into classes where not much was expected
> of them and they delivered even less" (Clorfene 19).

Alson agrees with Clorfene that the school's history of explicit racism "has purposely excluded

students of color from the rich curriculum of the school and the postsecondary opportunities

available to its high-achieving students" (50). Alson added that while much of the overt

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[55] According to the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, "Paternalism is the interference of a state or an individual with another person, against their will, and defended or motivated by a claim that the person interfered with will be better off or protected from harm" (Dworkin). Peter Suber adds that paternalism "is controversial because its end is benevolent, and its means coercive. Paternalists advance people's interests (such as life, health, or safety) at the expense of their liberty. Paternalism is a temptation in every arena of life where people hold power over others: in childrearing, education, therapy, and medicine." Source: http://legacy.earlham.edu/~peters/writing/paternal.htm.

structural discrimination ended by the early 1970s, "more subtle forms of bias have played out in the way individual adults and sometimes offices or departments have treated students of color and their parents" (50).

According to one district equity assessment focus group participant, the ideology of whiteness is a fundamental part of the institution:

> "We've normalized 'whiteness' in ETHS. Everybody should be 'white.' It's the reason our prior equity efforts have failed, because we never deconstruct whiteness. It must be institutionalized. How are our practices 'raced?'"(Autrey and Cowdery 13).

What these authors and focus group participant describe at ETHS is a school culture of control that is purposely and systematically rooted in whiteness and constructed through the racist, ideological experimentation in education that was developed at institutions such as Carlisle School, Hampton Institute, and Tuskegee Normal School only four years prior to the establishment of Evanston's only public high school. Through this narrative we can see how racism and white privilege as ideological mechanisms of the U.S. nation-state is perpetuated *through* the school's culture (role and presence of whiteness) it's hegemonic structures (hidden curriculum) and institutional practices (academic displacement) to target, discipline, and assimilate youth who can be marked by symbols of blackness.

In addition to the forces working within the school, popular reports on ETHS reveal that external forces such as moral panics about academic achievement and school safety have helped rationalize and sustain the school's control culture throughout the years. For instance, in her story about Evanston Township High School, Clorfene (19) recalls that a 1973 report produced by Dr. Jean Franklin Emmons provided a statistical analysis of ETHS students' standardized test scores that highlighted the racialized achievement gap at ETHS. The Emmons Report "shocked the community – and the school administration - into recognizing the depth of the [achievement

gap] problem" (Clorfene 19). In the wake of the Emmons Report the high school made a

"massive effort to attack the [achievement gap] problem" (Clorfene 19). Clorfene adds that the

school was motivated to do so "not only by public pressure, but by the slow, painful realization

that students who are not achieving, who do not think very much of themselves because they are

low on a hierarchy that prizes achievement and academic excellence, will only cause trouble for

those who do want achieve, both black and white" (19).

This portrayal of the high school's response to the socially constructed 'gap' mobilizes racist

common-sense logic about blackness through a panic discourse about school safety that is then

conflated into a panic about student achievement. Returning to Hall and his partners' (118)

explanation of public images, this racist imagery of marginal, deficient and potentially criminal

Black Diasporic youth is fused together in public and journalistic discourse to provide a quasi-

explanation for the gap phenomenon. The use of racist common sense imagery provides a

graphically compelling explanation of events that fall short of any deeper analysis.

Not surprisingly, personal narratives from students, parents, and school staff members of

color paint a very different picture of what happens when schools fail to analyze the institutional

systems of oppression that lead to disparities in education. In 2009, a district equity needs

assessment was commissioned to reveal the school's ideological climate at that specific moment

in time. This assessment included focus groups with ETHS students, parents, community

members and staff members. Focus group participants reiterated the fact that "for years there

have been two schools at ETHS, one for blacks (low level, remedial, and special education

classes) and one for whites (upper level honors and AP classes)" (Autrey and Cowdery 10).

Many parents of Black and Brown students were once students at ETHS, too, and are well

aware of ETHS's history of racism. Their experiences are deeply rooted in painful acts of

oppression by the institution as highlighted by one focus group participant: "[the parents who are former ETHS students] have many horror stories, and they believe nothing has changed over the years. They just want to get their children out of high school. They do not believe anything will be done to eliminate the disparities" (Autrey and Cowdery 17). In addition, the legacy of racism at ETHS and the school's failure to make the so-called "rich tradition" of excellence a reality for *all* students resonates with many of the school's current Black teachers and support staff who attended ETHS and who come from a long line of Black ETHS alumni: "We have parents and grandparents who went to this school and remember being discriminated against. There is a subculture of support staff, parents, and teachers, too, who are angry at the school that failed them" (Autrey and Cowdery 13). Testimonials from student respondents in the focus group shed light on the fact that the high school's de facto racial segregation was very much *present* and *persistent* in 2009:

> "A lot of black and white kids are separated from each other because we're so segregated. You may be in only one or two classes with white kids in four years at ETHS."
>
> "In honors classes, they don't mix us much. I'm the only Latino. I'm by myself. In all my classes, I'm the only one. I feel depressed."
>
> "Cheerleading helped me to meet black friends. There aren't many in my classes."
>
> (Autrey and Cowdery 16)

These student testimonials reveal how the school's pervasive white-privileging mechanisms operate in the classroom (i.e., the tracking that results in mostly White honors classes) and beyond in extracurricular spaces.

Interestingly, in the case of Evanston's cheerleading squad, yearbook photos show that the racial make up of the team in recent years has been mostly (and sometimes all) students who appear to be Black females. More analysis would be needed to determine when and how this shift in the race(d) representation of cheerleaders occurred, but historic yearbook photos indicate

that a (mostly) Black cheer squad wasn't always the case at Evanston high school. In fact, the squad photos from the high school's earliest years were comprised solely of students who appear to be White females. In this sense, the student testimonial about meeting Black friends through cheerleading highlights a significant departure from what the race(d) image of ETHS's cheerleading squad is imagined to look like in popular thought: mostly 'North Shore White girls' as depicted in the 2004 box office movie "Mean Girls" (produced by Paramount Pictures). Thus, Evanston's only public high school very much represents the complexities, contingencies, contestations, and multiplicities of a particular community: Evanston, Illinois. A brief departure to Evanston's race(d) history will provide a much needed context to understand the explicit and persistent history of neoliberalism and racism in the community and in the school.

A racialized history of Evanston

Evanston, Illinois originated in the 1850s through the vision of Northwestern University[56] founders who desired to create "a utopian religious-based community possessing a strict moral code and temperance" (Miles 1). Evanston's abundant land, proximity to the Lake Michigan shorefront, and its connectivity to Chicago's business district and other North Shore areas via rail lines made the location ideal for many affluent whites who sought refuge from Chicago's urban squalor, particularly following the Chicago Fire of 1871 (Robinson Jr. 18; Wiese 433; Miles 1).

Evanston's first Black residents arrived in the 1850s – often without choice – as domestic workers of these elite White households (Robinson Jr. 12-13; Wiese 434). Increasing numbers of Black settlers sought refuge in Evanston in the late 1800s and through the turn of the century for many of the same reasons as whites that migrated to the new suburb. In his book on the history

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[56] It is worth mentioning that Northwestern University was actually founded before the city itself in 1851 under the patronage of the Methodist Episcopal Church. (http://www.northwestern.edu/about/facts/history.html). The town was officially named "Evanston" in 1857 (http://cityofevanston.org/evanston-life/history-demographics/). Subsequently, the first high school in Evanston - the Preparatory School of Northwestern University - was established in 1857 (Davis 7). This was a private school. Evanston Township High School opened in 1888.

of Evanston's emerging Black community, Morris "Dino" Robinson Jr. (12-13) explains that this was in part due to persistent marketing by White Evanstonians who, both consciously and subconsciously, packaged and presented the growing suburb as an 'appealing' destination for Black peoples residing in the South and in the City of Chicago. For example, the city's significant population of abolitionist Methodists traveled to the South to promote Evanston and its prospects of a "better life" to newly emancipated Black peoples (Robinson Jr. 17, 21; Wiese 431). This representation of a "better life" included prospects of service industry jobs (i.e., coachmen, gardeners, laborers, domestics) as well as access to Evanston's housing market, both exceptional opportunities for Black settlers at this particular point in time in U.S. history. Additionally, Evanston's early Black residents, particularly those who migrated from the South, sought to build communities in locales that "combined elements of urban and rural living" (Wiese 429-30) with close proximity to well-developed rail systems to help maintain vital connections to their southern roots. By 1880 – three years before ETHS opened its doors – approximately 125 Black people lived in Evanston (Wiese 434; Miles 1).

Although Evanston presented better *possibilities* for Blacks than in the South or in Chicago, a review of Evanston's history reveals a reality rooted in racism, paternalism and neoliberal experimentation. In his study on Black housing and White financing practices in Evanston, Andrew Wiese explains that the city's race relations were historically structured "by a high degree of inequality that favored (and flattered) local whites; these practices also minimized conflict through patterns of paternalism and deference symbolized by the relationship of domestic service" (433). Specifically, by the early 1900s White elites in Evanston deliberately participated in the expansion of Evanston's Black community in general and the Black housing market in particular in order to control and contain the surge of newly arrived Black peoples. By supporting Black home buying within strict geographic limits "in neighborhoods west of the

tracks" (Wiese 430), what is currently Evanston's Fifth Ward, affluent White Evanstonians

guaranteed that Black settlers would pose "little threat to the social status or perceived property

values of Evanston's economic elite" (Wiese 433). Michael Frank Miles's research on the

racialized history of Evanston agrees with Wiese, noting that in the early 1900s, Black residents

accounted for less than four percent of the city's population and thus, in popular frames of

reference, posed no significant threat "to the welfare of the city's white population" (2). Both

scholars agree that White elites benefited greatly by supporting the limited growth of a

segregated Black sector in Evanston. White financed Black housing positioned Black workers in

close proximity to White households and businesses, making them readily availably to provide

services "that were in high demand" (Wiese 433) and to tend to "the possessions and desires"

(Miles 1) of Evanston's wealthiest residents. By 1910, Evanston had become known as a

"domestic service hub for Chicago's affluent North Shore" (Wiese 434), and was home to nearly

1,100 Black residents, making it the "largest Black suburban community in Illinois" and one of

the largest in the Midwest by 1940 (Robinson Jr. 13-15; Wiese 434).

    Racial segregation was further reinforced through acts of *private paternalism.* According to

Wiese, White employers used the practice of providing gifts – second hand clothing, furniture,

household supplies, food – to the men and women of color who worked for them in an effort to

'uplift' the welfare of the Black community; at the same time this effort also muted potential

conflict and enhancing "white feelings of benevolence (and superiority)" (449). Robinson Jr.

(21) explains that acts of paternalism extended into the public realm through the performance of

affluent whites granting permission to Black residents to build Black churches and community

centers and rent or purchase property (in *specific* locations, of course). He adds that racial

contentions were few as long as members of Evanston's Black community "knew its place"

(Robinson Jr. 21). This representation of seemingly exceptional race relations amid the Jim Crow

era in the U.S. helped to (re)create a racist common sense logic among White Evanstonians that positioned control mechanisms (i.e., paternalism, de facto segregation) as essential tools for shaping a utopian community "without any 'race problem'" (Wiese 449). This logic set the stage for the socially constructed and well-marketed image of "diversity"[57] – or what is often referred to as "drive-by diversity"[58] – that exists in contemporary Evanston today.

In addition to structuring racial segregation via housing policies and lending practices, affluent White Evanstonians sought to keep the races apart by spearheading philanthropic campaigns to fund racially-specific institutions and facilities in Evanston. Around 1914, White donors channeled their money into establishing a boarding house for single Black women, day care services for Black children, a Black Community Hospital, and a separate YMCA – the Emerson Street YMCA – to provide recreational facilities for the growing number of Black youth, and in particular, Black *male* youths (Robinson Jr. 39, 42, 47; Wiese 449; Miles 6). Underpinning the proposal to build the Emerson Street YMCA was a very specific response to one of White Evanston's first moral panics about Black male youths.

According to Robinson Jr.'s research, this panic discourse was concerned with disciplining and regulating some alleged "700 under-supervised black boys" (39) in Evanston.

A YMCA pamphlet from this era highlights the panic:

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[57] See the City of Evanston's "Evanston Life" page (http://cityofevanston.org/about/). Also see February 13, 2009, *Chicago Tribune* article, "Evanston not your everyday suburb" by Jeffery Steele.

[58] The phrase "drive-by diversity" is a colloquialism used by some members of the Evanston community to critically point out how the popularized notion of "diversity" in Evanston is simply a preferred image and does not accurately represent the lived experience for most of the city's Black and Brown residents. The expression "drive-by diversity" speaks to (mostly) White Evanstonians driving visitors around the city and pointing to evidence of its 'rich diversity' via the many types of peoples who share public walkways and or gather in common spaces in a seemingly harmonious manner. Of course, upon critical examination this image does not represent the reality for many people of color who live in Evanston. Interracial socializing is miniscule within the segregated housing boundaries that have existed since the city's founding years. The word "diversity," as a white-privileging mechanism of control, has shaped the ways in which Evanston residents of all races develop their sense of identity and consent to the desired cultural hegemony. It necessarily becomes a "drive-by" construct due to the deliberate and insidious manner in which it eclipses the city's legacy of racism, paternalism and residential segregation.

"Already, these [700 under-supervised Black] boys are contributing to 50% of Evanston's delinquency problem, and, out of all proportions to their numbers, to the problem of the Associated Charities. They are found to be somewhat troublesome in the schools, and the matter of their conduct on the streets is often a thing of which we are not proud" (Robinson Jr. 38).

It is important to note that there is no research to confirm that 700 Black male youths were 'under-supervised' in Evanston during this specific point in time, nor is there data to confirm that Black male youth contributed to *50 percent* of "Evanston's delinquency problem" – particularly when Black residents accounted for only 7.7 percent of Evanston's population in 1930 (Robinson Jr. 38). Yet this panic discourse in its racist structure, made popular through commercial marketing strategies and word of mouth, successfully perpetuated common-sense images of young Black males and their families that were linked to Lawrence's themes of the inadequate family, criminal youth and cultures of deprivation. This image of the looming Black male menace served, in part, as motivation for Evanston's wealthy White philanthropists to raise the funds needed to build the Emerson Street YMCA at a cost of $23,000.

Despite its origins and perhaps because of it, the Emerson Street YMCA[59] functioned as an important counter-hegemonic site that helped shape the cultural and social identities of Black residents in Evanston, in general, and the history of Black Evanston in a broader sense. Miles tells us that the Emerson Street Y, which opened its doors to Black residents in 1914, was home to sports competitions, "church functions, youth and adult social clubs, parties, dances and formal banquets" (7) that became embedded in the social lives of Black Evanstonians. According to the oral history of AnnaBelle Frazier – who was born in Evanston in 1918 to Black parents who migrated from Abbeville, South Carolina – the Emerson Street YMCA served as the social center for her and other Black youth who attended ETHS but were prohibited from participating

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[59] For more about the 60-year history of the Emerson Street YMCA and its legacy and impact on Black Evanstonians, watch "Unforgettable," a video by filmmaker Susan Hope Engel. Source: http://www.mcgawymca.org/about-our-y/history/.

in after-school activities at the high school[60] (Miles 106-07). Black seniors from ETHS attended their high school prom at the Emerson Street Y, and it served as a residence house for Black male students who attended Northwestern University (Miles 7). The Emerson Street YMCA continued to serve as a cultural core for Evanston's Black residents for 55 years until the Grove Street YMCA (now known as the McGaw YMCA), which had historically served only White residents, desegregated its facilities in 1969 (Robinson Jr. 41). Interestingly, the Emerson Street building – and its symbolic representation of counter-hegemonic *possibilities* in Evanston's racialized history – was later demolished.

Although their efforts in mortgage lending, public philanthropy, and private paternalism were positioned as a "good thing" in popular accounts, this neoliberal logic among Evanston's affluent whites played a key role in developing and maintaining the racial segregation that exists in Evanston today. Ironically, scholars agree that Evanston's residential segregation practices and white paternalism coupled with the aspirations and sense of agency that existed among Black settlers created the perfect conditions for a tightly knit Black enclave in Evanston through which many Black residents were able to thrive (Robinson Jr. 26; Wiese 433; Miles 6). The personal narratives of Black Evanstonians suggest that the "agency and initiative for creating black Evanston had been theirs. Whites had stood in the way" (Wiese 450). The oral history of Mississippian Caldonia Martin, who moved to Evanston in 1909, reinforces this point by stating: "They said that Evanston, the beginning of it, was for rich people and help and not for colored people to come out and live…Evanston is really a high place to live, but we get here, and we stay" (Wiese 450).

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[60] Evanston Township High School was open to all residents of Evanston/Skokie from its origin in 1883 despite the prevalence of racially segregated elementary and middle schools, social service agencies, and hospitals (Alson 50). However, most popular accounts highlight a racially segregated social and extracurricular experience in the high school into the 1970s (Alson 5; Miles 23). Robinson Jr. tells us, in general, "school systems in Evanston discouraged Black students – especially males – from attending" (27).

While a complete analysis of Evanston's racial politics is not the focus of this paper, it is important to note that what is missing from this history is the way in which established Black Evanstonians, as members of a particular hegemonic structure, may have also disciplined and regulated newly-arrived Black peoples themselves. Jacqueline Stewart highlights how the sharp rise in Chicago's Black population in the early 1900's resulted in various expressions of racism, including routine discrimination of newly arrived Black people by established Black Chicagoans who "had struggled for years (sometimes generations) to attain some semblance of social standing and political influence in Chicago" (662). Black spectatorship, as Stewart calls it, is structured "not only by limitations imposed by dominant practices but also by expectations and pressures blacks created for each other" (662). In the context of newly established Black communities in Chicago, Black spectatorship occurred in response to the fear that "the flood of rough, unlettered migrants would adversely affect the public image and social status of the [Black] race as a whole" (Stewart 662). Noting Evanston's spatial proximity to Chicago as well as the Black migration connections from Chicago to Evanston, it is likely that established Black Evanstonians – operating *through* an ideological framework of Black spectatorship – imposed dominant practices of paternalism as well as the assimilationist expectations created by the emerging Black Evanston community on newly arrived Black settlers. Today, both Black and White elites, including community leaders, politicians, and educators, employ white-privileging mechanisms of public philanthropy and private paternalism to contain and regulate raced bodies within the already well-established control cultures that exist in the neighborhoods and schools of Evanston.

Marketing "E-Town": the role of marketplace competition

Each public school in the U.S. faces a different reality in the marketplace depending on its location, its competitors, political influences, and so on. School marketing tactics tout a school's *specific* ability to produce desirable outcomes, such as increased academic achievement at the local and national level, greater civic engagement among students, advanced safety measures, improved operational efficiencies, and better responsiveness to families and the school community at large. Carlisle Industrial Indian School, for example, carried out a strategic public relations and marketing campaign to portray the school as a successful experiment in "civilization" that could play a role in solving the "Indian problem" (Navarro-Rivera 236). School director Pratt provided tours of the Carlisle to distinguished state and federal legislators, government officials, and representatives of educational institutions who were "interested in Pratt's 'civilizing' and 'assimilationist' experiment" (Navarro-Rivera 236).

In addition Carlisle school officials produced a series of "before" and "after" student admissions photos that were used in marketing materials to advertise the school's success in the reacculturation of indigenous youth. In her thesis referenced by Navarro-Rivera, Genevieve Bell argued that to understand Carlisle School, one must interrogate its popular representations such as the admissions photographs:

> "At the time [the photos] were seen and sold as irrefutable proof that it was possible to raise Indians out of savagery and transform them into model pupils and citizens. A century later, those same photographs seem shocking, serving as an enduring reminder of the power and brutality of the American State" (Bell as quoted in Navarro-Rivera 231).

A school's marketing efforts, then, driven by capitalist market relations, can tell us much about the school's desired image, its self-perceived relative strengths (and weaknesses), and positions within a local market (Lubienski 119). Specifically, marketing is used as a control mechanism to

shape the *ideological* dimensions of a school's culture and subsequently the particular bodies that are recruited, retained and promoted.

My analysis on panic discourses around the education crisis in Evanston have revealed that for the city's White taxpayers, "diversity" at ETHS is acceptable as long as the school preserves the institutional systems of power, laws and policies that recognize and protect property rights based on race and privilege. The historic pattern of parents of White youth receiving a disproportionate number of unwarranted class schedule changes after the semester begins or the unspoken expectation that White students can routinely navigate hallways and common spaces – often without permission (i.e., hall passes) – free of policing by school agents demonstrates this privilege. If these symbolic and material privileges are challenged or imperiled, parents of White youth along with the media and school agents construct a trope of white victimage that is lifted up through discursive threats of mass exodus (aka white flight) to state that privileged White families can – and will – move to another locale to fund a different high school (public or private) that will uphold this power and privilege. Yet through white victimage discourse we can see the very contradictions in the making and marketing of U.S. schools, which are promoted as spaces that provide liberating educational experiences for all, free from ideological constraints. Borrowing from Carrillo Rowe ("Whose "America"?" 128), the contradiction that must be submerged within the white flight panic (and other panics related to the education crisis) is that privileged, White Americans must face up to the fact that their 'American' dream – and the necessary white-privileging mechanisms that exist to produce that dream – is enabled by the nightmares of Black Diasporic peoples. Carrillo Rowe explains that white victimage discourse "evokes fear and rage, providing the affective appeal necessary to contain this contradiction" ("Whose "America"?" 128).

Clorfene's 1977 article documents how the notion of white victimage has been fueled and refueled by privileged White Evanstonians via popular white flight panic discourse since the mid 70s at the very least. The article begins with a narrative about one family's desire to flee Evanston:

> "A white family in Evanston has put its home up for sale. 'I'm in a hurry to get out of here,' says the mother. 'This neighborhood has changed in three years. We have four kids. I can't spend my life picking them up and taking them wherever they need to go. Our son, he was thrown, pushed from behind, roughed up. His black friends promised to 'take care of it' for him. But it's the rough kids. They swear. There is a constant barrage of hostility. My kids are tired of fighting every day'" (Clorfene 18).

Similar to the public images painted in the comments of *Evanston Patch* readers, this mother's narrative, with its racist structure, creates and recreates white anxiety around a threatening Black male presence looming at the high school seeking to harm "civilized" White youth. Presented through an anti-black framework that positions whiteness as normal, this mother's story about her "innocent" White male child's vulnerability inside of the school building directly links race ('black') and gender (implied to by the male dominated acts of being 'thrown', 'pushed from behind', 'roughed up') with the criminal ('rough kids').

The pathology of blackness in this portrayal is represented as *so abnormal* and *so absurd* that even the White youth's apparent Black friends can't police or contain the deviance that threatens to consume her child. The mother's account of the threatening Black male menace at ETHS continues:

> "The teachers in the school, they see the changes. Kids sass the teachers. I can understand a Negro having a right to want. He has a right to the same opportunities. But how do you handle a bitterness that has built up for generations? It's too rough. Our kids just can't handle it. They have a right to an education without a fight. We have friends who ask how we could ever have lived here at all. I feel bad. There's no softness anymore" (Clorfene 18).

Here the mother's story connects a historic construction of race ('Negro') with a school culture that lacks the control mechanisms ('it's too rough') to contain deviant youth ('kids sass the

teachers'). Racist common sense images about blackness are lifted up through white victimage

panic discourse in an attempt to contain the contradictions that exist within the historically racist

institution and evoke fear and rage that her children's positions of privilege have been threatened

amidst a rapidly shifting racialized landscapes in public education.

There is no doubt a correlation between this White Evanston mother's panic discourse and

the experiences and attitudes of other White Americans at this particular point in time in U.S

history. At a macro level, Iton tells us that attempts by the U.S. to include people of color as

citizens of the nation-state via public policies and programs in the late 1950s and 60s and the

dissolution of Jim Crow laws resulted in a "characteristic demonization of not only the

prophylactic state,[61] public policies, goods, and spaces but also the city as a site of liberation and

transformation" (138). In the realm of the School, Iton (138) explains that a gradual

disinvestment in public education occurred across the U.S. following the *Brown v. Board of*

Education ruling to end racial segregation in schools in 1954. Indeed, the Evanston mother's

perspective was likely a result of a much larger nation-wide attitude among liberally-minded

White people – as well as people of color who had access to power through whiteness – who

supported racial policies that lifted discrimination against people of color so long as white-

privileging mechanisms remained intact. Through a lens of white victimage we can see how the

presence of Black Diasporic youth and their families threatened to expose the contradictions in

American schools, especially as populations shift (and continue to shift), producing a new White

minority, as highlighted by Carrillo Rowe ("Whose "America"?" 128). By lifting up a local

narrative about Evanston to a wider audience through a nationally published journal, this white

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[61] Richard Iton describes the prophylactic state as one that "inoculates, injects, protects, and secures through the provision of public goods and wards off those elements suspected of spreading various diseases and contagions, in order ideally to produce healthy, self-regulating, and self-fashioning citizens" (133). In this sense, the prophylactic state depends on the exclusion of certain groups – those outside of the norm and realm of white male supremacy – that are imagined to be contagious and diseased. It is their "nonrecognition as citizens, and the impossibility of their ever being members" (Iton 202) that secures the prophylactic state and sustains cultural hegemony.

anxiety and related appeal to contain the contradictions (by containing the necessary Other) is

articulated and privileged at a much broader level.

In fact, just a few years prior to the Evanston mother's account of perceived violence at

ETHS, an image of violence at the high school was constructed in a *Time* magazine article titled,

"Violence in Evanston." This portrayal of mayhem at ETHS served up to a national audience is

worth quoting in its entirety:

> "A freshman girl was raped on a third-floor stair landing during orientation week last summer.
> Once classes started, a home-economics teacher and a Russian teacher were attacked by
> students. A school accountant was robbed. Throughout the year the school was plagued by arson,
> larceny and vandalism. Security officers were called almost daily to break up fights or
> investigate thefts.
>
> The setting for this crime wave is not an inner-city blackboard jungle but suburban Evanston
> Township High School on Chicago's elm-shaded, affluent North Shore. For years the high school
> has been known as one of the best in the nation, and it still earns that reputation. The current
> senior class has nine Merit Scholars, the largest number in the school's 92-year history.
> Evanston's innovative curriculum offers 260 courses and programs; the campus includes a
> planetarium and television studio.
>
> But Evanston, like many other previously tranquil schools, has fallen victim to a rising tide of
> school violence across the nation" (Time).

Thus, the creation and recreation of these panic discourses in local and national spaces in the

1970s created a popularized narrative about *who* should be valued in newly racially integrated

schools like ETHS and *what* material and symbolic privileges needed to be protected in the wake

of desegregation. Bell tells us that after the *Brown* decision, White families could – and did –

choose to "run and hide their children in white schools, private or suburban, that court orders

[requiring compliance with the *Brown* decision] could not reach" (26). Thus, when the Evanston

mother deemed that the high school (and by extension the city) was not able to contain the

growing presence of the "rough and sassy" Black Diasporic youth who no doubt shifted the peer-

to-peer power relations and threatened to erode privileges and reveal the contradictions of racism

at the high school, she chose to leave.

Its important to note that, despite the threats of white flight and the moral panics about school safety and student achievement, Clorfene tells us that there was not "any significant exodus of White families from the school and the community" (18) in 1977. In fact, she maintains that by all objective measures available, ETHS "maintained the academic standard of its white students, improved the academic standing of its black students, and reduced segregation-by-test-score" (Clorfene 18) that school year. Clorfene (18) concludes that some families that did leave Evanston and ETHS ultimately returned to the community and re-enrolled at the high school. The same can be said about ETHS's "success" today, if student achievement data is the criterion. On a regular basis, the school markets student success via individual and group accomplishments in academic and extracurricular competitions, its state and national rankings, and data points such as an increased number of students of color enrolled in honors and Advanced Placement courses and the highest ACT scores in the history of the school. Yet my brief analysis of white flight as a popular response to ETHS's 2010 detracking efforts in Chapter 2 highlights how the trope of white victimage remains active today. Returning to Carrillo Rowe's ("Whose "America"?" 116) explanation of white victimage discourse in the contemporary U.S., we can see how the decentering of whiteness via America's shifting racial and national configuration has led to a moral panic that white privilege in education is under siege by an influx of Black and Brown bodies. In this sense, attempts to dismantle white-privileging structures in schools across the country fuel and refuel a popularized representation of White youth – framed as the ideal All-American students – as *potential* "victims" of a threatening alien presence the seeks to erode their position as the racial majority. The result is the (re)production of white flight panic discourse among primarily White families who seek to leave perceived sites of Black liberation and transformation and thus, through a theory of whiteness as property,

devalue the local school's marketplace before the flaws of their historically privileged positions are revealed.

Taking this argument a step further, global market interests play a significant part in shaping the American educational system, as well. By all popular accounts the U.S. Supreme Court's *Brown v. Board of Education* ruling to end racial segregation in schools in 1954 had been marketed as an effort by those in power to end racial bias in U.S. schools, in particular, and a promising "reform of racial injustice" (Bell 25) in a broader sense. But what is missing from this popular discourse is the association between the *Brown* decision and the capitalist motivations of globalization in which it was rooted. Specifically, Derrick Bell tells us that the *Brown* decision was largely an international public relations campaign created by the U.S. nation-state, "motivated by the need to counteract the reports of segregation and lynching [in the United States] that received international attention, particularly in the media dominated communist governments" (25). Bell explains that in its briefs to the Court, "the Justice Department urged invalidating segregation [in schools] as a means of improving America's image as the country competed with Russia to influence mainly non-white people emerging from colonialist domination" (Bell 25).

The *Brown v. Board of Education* decision, then, demonstrates how racial policies in U.S. schooling have been adopted through an anti-black framework that is driven by local and global marketplace demand. The historic practice by public school districts in general, and the U.S. nation-state in a broader sense, to gain and maintain marketplace position using corporate marketing and public relations tactics suggests that public schools in the U.S. are always and already shaped through capitalist business and service models – in combination with "a rigorous and unforgiving ideology of individual accountability" (Apple 180) – that seek to increase a school's competitive edge in an effort to retain and recruit *particular* students (e.g. Lubienski

2007, Oplatka and Hemsley-Brown 2007, Li and Hung 2009). At the local level, large districts

like the Chicago Public School system have seen the profit-minded community insert itself

directly into education with actions like using "a 'CEO' with business experience instead of a

Superintendent with education experience" (Caref et al. 6) to run the school system. Thus, the

construct of marketplace competition actively imbeds the U.S. education system into the

capitalist structure of the nation-state and perpetuates what Grossberg calls the discursive

formations of the economies that have privileged capitalism, consumerism, and consumption as

"the new logic of rational choice" (16). My experiences in school communications and

subsequent analysis of the panic discourses that (re)create the larger crisis on education informs

me that there is already and always an association between marketing efforts of U.S. schools and

the capitalist interests of the American nation-state. School communications, then, becomes a

crucial site for investigating complexities and contradictions in education.

The (re)mixing of "E-Town": a history of efforts

During my work in school communications I have witnessed an increased demand by school

leaders and publically appointed board members to implement strategic marketing campaigns

and public relations tactics that counter moral panics about student achievement and school

safety. The majority of assignments I receive from school administrators are designed to remix

the popularized notion that the "rich tradition of excellence" at ETHS is only accessible by some.

The implied, often unspoken goal is that, in order to gain and retain interest convergence among

Evanston's elites to support the school's racial equity efforts (e.g., detracking; district equity

work), these efforts must be *reframed* into a palatable format that assures and reassures

Evanstonians in power that racial justice will not be achieved at the expense of White youth and

to a greater extent, white supremacy. Indeed, racial justice efforts in education are concerned

about the impact of race and racism on all students *including* White youth. However, the concept that White people are raced and also harmed by racism is often lost in the centered sea of whiteness.

To address the long-standing issues of racism and equity in education at ETHS in the broader sense, school leaders have introduced a number of changes over the years such as curricular changes and structural reforms, the establishment of student-led Black and Latin@ mentoring programs, and the creation of a new district mission statement that positioned "academic equity and excellence for all [students] as nonnegotiable" (Alson 49-50). In June 1999, Alson collaborated with superintendents at school districts across the country with similar student demographics and disparities in student achievement to establish the Minority Student Achievement Network (MSAN)[62] to share information about the gap and conduct joint research. Ten years later under the leadership of the current superintendent, the district hired a consultant group to conduct the district equity needs assessment referenced throughout this paper. The goal of this equity needs assessment was to reveal the school's ideological climate at that specific moment in time and develop an equity transformation plan that would build upon the racial equity work established in previous years. Shortly after I arrived at ETHS, I was invited to participate on the district equity leadership team and still serve as a member today.

My participation in the district's equity work coupled with my graduate studies journey and my personal experiences as a parent of a Black male ETHS student has dramatically shaped (and continues to shape) my work in school communications. The most humbling part is that despite

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[62] According to the Minority Student Achievement Network website, MSAN was formed in 1999 as "a national coalition of school districts that have come together to study achievement gaps that exist in their districts between students of color and their white peers." (http://msan.wceruw.org/). Students at Evanston Township High School have recently renamed the local MSAN chapter to "More Students Achieving Now" to remove the term "minority" in a school where students of color represent that majority. It should be noted that, despite this discursive act of social justice, this group remains a space for mostly higher-achieving Black and Brown students and the group objective is focused mainly on academic achievement. As I have argued in this thesis, the focus on achievement does little to address the hegemonic structures of school cultures of control and further eclipses the academic displacement that is occurring at alarming rates among their peers.

the lived experiences, the counter-narratives, the research, the deconstruction of ideological norms, rites and traditions, as a school employee it requires a conscious, daily effort to liberate my choices and actions from the School's ideological forces. And I don't always get it right. For example, to open up possibilities for all youth to imagine their academic potentials, many school marketing strategies orchestrated under my direction have been used to position the high school as a great "equalizing" force through which <u>all</u> students – including those popularly marked as marginal, deviant, and deprived – are transformed into model pupils and citizens. Yet this simplified notion that education received through the School will level the ideological playing field is problematic because it relies on the trope of white victimage to contain the school's racist history and eclipse the fact that White students remain the primary beneficiaries of white-privileging structures at ETHS. In addition, this approach (re)energizes racist common sense logic that centers whiteness and White youth at ETHS as 'normal' and 'naturally superior' students. Through this popularized framework, whiteness, along with its symbolic and material privileges, becomes the ideal that youth under the umbrella of blackness should strive to meet.

Another example can be seen in my response to the 2010 detracking crisis. Following the crisis we launched a sequence of public engagement efforts such as a series of community meetings hosted by the superintendent, a parent ambassador program, and a Saturday campus tour program. From a school communications perspective, these public relations efforts, steeped in the ideology of the School and Communication apparatuses, were brilliant responses. Generally speaking, the group tours of the high school campus were constructed to reassure parents of prospective students – and parents of White students in particular – that their children would be "safe" at ETHS. However, a few months after providing the tours I began to analyze the impact of the program: What purpose did the tours serve? Whom did the tours serve? Which questions were asked by tour guests and why? In its most essential form the campus tour

program was simply another means of strengthening ETHS's 'All-American' image (while covering up it's flawed racist history) as it competed with private and other public schools in the area. Despite my growing understanding of the internal and external forces that promote cultural hegemony in U.S. schools, I was not yet able to conceptualize ways in which to respond to the larger and ongoing crisis around education without feeding *into* it. Based on the personal accounts shared by my district equity team colleagues, I was not alone in the struggle to identify and implement counter-hegemonic solutions at ETHS.

Thus, for more than two decades, district equity leaders at Evanston Township High School have engaged in equity transformation work to look at the impact of race in education. Their work has centered on this essential question: "Why are Black and Brown children persistently and perpetually the lowest performing student populations in Evanston Township High School?" Through my lived experiences as a parent, a school agent, and member of the equity team, I have expanded this question to, "Why are Black and Brown *bodies* – which represent the majority of the student population – persistently and perpetually the most targeted, policed and disciplined bodies in Evanston Township High School?" The answers to these questions go beyond a simple opposition between domination (school administration) and subordination (students; test scores) into the larger realm of the School and the capitalist regime.

As I have shown in my research to this point, there is something larger at work here that is influencing cultures of control in public institutions, both locally and nationally, internally and externally. While the continued and tireless efforts of district equity leaders at ETHS and other school districts across the nation have looked at ways to improve *achievement* for all students through racial equity, there has been little focus on the school's pervasive culture of control and its blatant endorsement of white supremacy. In fact, there is an unrelenting popularized narrative

at the ETHS and throughout the country that academic equity – and all the structures, curricular changes, and programs that will make it possible – will *liberate* students of color and position them for greater *possibilities* of success. But *who* is defining "success" here? What does success look like? Will it be the same for all students of color? Should it be? According to Bell, theories of whiteness as property create a framework through which success for the Black Diasporic person "requires effective functioning achieved with the knowledge that their work will not be recognized or rewarded to the same degree as a white person doing the same thing" (31). In this sense efforts to improve or market measures of achievement *alone* do not amount to equitable experiences in education among White youth and youth of the Black Diaspora. Expanding on this, Bell tells us that while historic racial policies in the U.S. (i.e., Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation, post-Civil War Amendments, *Brown v. Board of Ed.)* are often justified by claims of remedying discrimination, commitments to these policies were made only when the mostly White male policy-makers "saw that they themselves could derive benefits – seldom openly discussed – that were at least as important as those blacks would receive" (28). Thus, a singular focus on changing educational policies without considering the struggles and transformations within capitalism (and thus the role the School as an apparatuses) is shortsighted.

Through my experiences working in school communications and attending seminars about racial equity in education and conferences on critical race theory across the U.S., much of the discourse around racial equity in education is deferred to the simplified, essentialist notion of liberation and transformation through student achievement. This perspective reinforces the responsibility of the individual student (and their families) to become intellectually superior, moral, and highly productive achievers against all ideological and systemic odds. The hyperfocus on student achievement, then, masks the systematic ways in which the School (and the School-Family) uses systems of control to sort and label young people, particularly Black and Brown

males who are constructed as menaces to society. Specifically, looking at struggles in schools through a framework of education theories *only* limits the possibilities for change to alterations to the curriculum, school programs, and policies that have been integral to the anti-black framework of schooling since the inception of Carlisle Indian School and others. By instituting changes to the control mechanisms in schools (i.e., the scripted curricula, school rules and discipline policies, rigid schedules, and architectures of visibility and containment) *without* looking at ways to decenter the dominant ideology perpetuated *through* the educational apparatus itself change becomes little more than repurposed and redressed methods of control. Thus, conversations about the impact of race and racism in schools must include a much larger, more extensive analysis of the social relations that constitute the struggle for racial justice in education and other cultural sites throughout the nation. I return to Grossberg's framework for cultural studies to suggest that the movement to (re)mix school cultures of control, and the white-privileging mechanisms that support them, requires radical contextualization in order to avoid creating and re-creating the same systems of power and privilege we seek to deconstruct.

Racism, Hall argues, "is not a permanent human or social deposit which is simply waiting to be triggered off when the circumstances are right. It has no natural and universal law of development. It does not always assume the same shape" (Quoted in Grossberg "Cultural Studies" 4). Bell asserts that "it is racism that underlies the paradox of a nation built on the combination of free-market economy and popular democracy" (30). Hall goes on to say that, while racism "may draw on the cultural and ideological traces which are deposited in a society by previous historical phases, it always assumes specific forms which arise out of the present—not the past—conditions and organisation of society…It is a racism 'at home', not abroad. It is the racism not of a dominant but of a declining social formation" (Quoted in Solomos et al. 12). Through this perspective, approaching my work in school communications through radical

contextuality requires me to step *through* and *outside* of organizational life – which is only the most immediate context of my work – and look at constructs of race and racism in relation to other contexts of social, political, economic and cultural life (Grossberg "Cultural Studies" 3).

Thus, Grossberg's framework of radical contexuality provides a meaningful (re)entry point for educators, parents and students alike, and establishes the momentum for a profound shift in education itself. For educators, this framework gives us an access point to begin grappling with the ideological and repressive work the School forces us to do on a day-to-day basis. By scrutinizing what is inside the School – the norms, traditions, practices, mission, values – and deconstructing the ideological systems working around us and through us, my colleagues and I can attempt to turn the few weapons we can find "against the ideology, the system and the practices in which [we] are trapped," as Althusser (157) champions us to do. By radically contextualizing their subjectivity in the School-Family pairing, parents (and particularly parents of young people of color) can amplify weapons of voice against the master narrative, against the dominant ideology and mechanisms of control that situate our children and us as deficient, marginal, and pathological. This counters and subsequently resists what has been said about us and what institutions of the nation-state expect of us.

From this point I turn my focus on the youth and their abilities to resist, refuse, and remix the same ideology, system and practices that seek to monitor and police them, too. Educators and parents should be attuned to the capacity of young people to reflect on their own situations and thus acknowledge youths' potential to participate as actors in the solutions to their oppression. Through their experiences, we can be reminded why our own heart and soul, our ingenuity and devotion to young people are the very tools needed to decenter the systems of power and ideological mechanisms that seek to monitor and control us all in school settings.

Chapter 4: Spectacular Youth Subcultures as Sites of Resistance

So far in this paper I have attempted to show how a school's culture plays a critical role in creating the necessary conditions to form consensus among students and school employees. I have aimed to explain how power relations are used to uphold hegemonic order in schools through cultures of control. Using historical accounts, I argued that education (and the School-Family pairing) has been used as an apparatus of the state for more than 130 years to solidify conquest and further the economic and political interests of the American nation-state on U.S. soil and beyond. In this chapter I will explore how mechanisms of control are used to regulate Black Diasporic bodies, languages and performances in the hallways of public schools. I will then provide examples of how young people resist – and refuse – this policing each day through expressive subaltern methods.

Hallways as sites for performance and negotiation

Transitions in hallways outside of the gaze of school agents can be an exceptionally fulfilling time for young people during the school day. For roughly five minutes each hour, school hallway spaces are alive with intergroup interactions that showcase a school's spirit, full of tensions and possibilities. At ETHS, these intergroup dynamics are amplified by the sprawling school structure itself where more than 3,000 students and nearly 600 staff maneuver through 1.1 million square feet of interior space, four cafeterias, 47 stairwells, 55 exterior doors, and corridors "that stretch more than 15,000 lineal feet" (Partington 1). Throughout these corridors young people consume and participate in performances and other forms of textural culture (i.e., music played loudly from mobile devices), negotiating their social, political, economic and material relations at particular points in time each day. To borrow from Grossberg ("Cultural Studies" 17), it is within these hallway spaces that new modes of individualization and new

structures of social belonging transform the structures of social life and reality. In order to understand the ways in which youth identity formation is shaped by school cultures of control, we must look at youth cultural performances and social interactions *beyond* the classroom space.

Popular discourses about school rules and student discipline often focus on the broader institutional policies (the laws themselves) and the teacher's role in carrying out these policies in classroom spaces. Drawing on my experience in school communications, there is very little focus on the ways in which control mechanisms are used to routinely discipline bodies and in particular bodies of color beyond the classroom. This is problematic for two reasons. First, the focus on the classroom situates the teacher as the sole purveyor of order and control in a school system, and eclipses the role of the administration and other school employees as well as the institution itself in creating and recreating the school's culture of control. Second, due to the function of the tracking system in U.S. public schools (a topic that is beyond the scope of this paper), many classroom spaces are racially homogeneous as referenced earlier in this paper. Thus, I focus on *outside* of the classroom as an alternative space for intergroup interactions and performances in schools to reveal the *possibilities* of spaces within which young people both conform to and challenge hegemony.

To turn once more to Jacqueline Stewart's article on Black spectatorship, she references how "the streetcar functions as the exemplary stage for black urban performance" (663). Using this framework it is possible to imagine how hallways of public schools serve as an important stage for performance of Black Diasporic youth. The hallway – like the streetcar – is a site of intergroup exchange and interracial interaction, and therefore acts as "a defining space for the public perception [of blackness]" (Stewart 663). It is on this stage at ETHS that Evanstonians of all ages, of all raced, gendered and classed identities, perform and negotiate their individual and

social politics. Returning to Stewart's (662) construct of Black spectatorship, we are reminded

not only of the expectations and pressures enacted on Black Diapsporic youth through their peer–

to–peer relations with each other, but also the expectations and pressures imposed by dominant

practices. Through a framework of Black spectatorship, we can imagine how the diverse

composition of the ETHS hallway audience produces a range of "spectatorial contexts and

potential responses" (Stewart 665) that are positioned not only against each other but against the

school's normalized backdrop of whiteness. As the sea of groups and individuals transition from

one structured classroom space to the next, they wear the most "respectable" as well as the most

"deviant" style options, speak in varying languages,[63] dialects, decibels and tones, and perform

different elements from popular culture (i.e., imitating the latest music video dance steps,

mocking the latest YouTube sensation, or singing a hook from a hit song). By (re)imagining

these corridors through a context of Black spectatorship we can start to see "a set of numerous

complicit and resistant possibilities for black agency and activity" (Stewart 666) that are made

and remade at particular moments in time. Thus, the hallway becomes a crucial domain for

understanding the struggle over hegemony in schools. This next section provides detailed

examples of the ways in which performances and presentations of blackness are policed in

school hallways.

Policing of 'blackness': bodies, language, presentation of self

The practice of using constant surveillance, observation, and controlled socialization to

police blackness in U.S. schools has been well documented since the touted 'success' of the

reacculturation process at Carlisle Industrial Indian School, Hampton, Tuskegee, and others. The

fundamental mission of Carlisle School is evident today in the discursive practices and

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[63] Students at ETHS reportedly speak 33 different languages in addition to English. Source: http://www.eths.k12.il.us/about/.

educational policies that were created to contain and control young people in school

environments. Specifically, scholars agree that educational policies and practices were designed

to regulate three constructions of self through school cultures of control: bodies, language,

presentation of self (Hall et al. 341; Carby 181; Ferguson 92; Irizarry). Hall and his partners tell

us that Black Diasporic bodies, languages and performances, in particular, are subject to

disproportionate and repeated regulation in schooling in the U.S. and beyond:

> "In education, the reproduction of educational disadvantage for blacks is accomplished, in part, through a variety of racially specific mechanisms. The 'cultural capital' of this black sector is constantly expropriated, often unwittingly, through its practical devaluation. Sometimes this takes the form of patronizing, stereotypical or racist attitudes of some teachers and classrooms; sometimes, the fundamental misrecognitions of history and culture, as much in the over-all 'culture' of the school as, specifically, through syllabuses and textbooks. This is especially the case in those black or nearly black schools in the predominately black areas which, despite the ethnic identity and culture of their intake, remain 'white' schools, exclusively geared to the reproduction, at a low level of competence, of white cultural and technical skills" (Hall et al. 340).

Through a framework of disciplinary power, school agents label, evaluate, and sort individuals

who do not fit the popularized 'All-American' image of the model pupil and citizen or who show

a desire to resist, refuse, or remix traditional world views through their own defensive cultural

practices. In particular, school agents disproportionately single out students of color –

specifically Black Diasporic males – as "deficient deviants" in need of heightened scrutiny,

compensatory interventions, and discipline (Hall et al. 340-41; Carby 34; Ferguson 86-89;

Lipman 161; Monahan and Torres 7).

Evanston's only public high school is not exempt from this trend among schools to

excessively target and discipline bearers of blackness, as is evidenced by public reports[64] that its

Black and Brown male students have been disproportionately represented as students found in

violation of disciplinary codes. In fact, in her 1977 article, Clorfene (21) notes a history of

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[64] Refer to the school June 19, 2013 Discipline Report on the ETHS website for data. Source:
https://v3.boardbook.org/Public/PublicItemDownload.aspx?ik=33992758.

racialized and gendered academic displacement at ETHS. The author shares a story about an

expelled Black male student who was suing the school board for alleged discrimination in

discipline based on a claim that "more than 90 percent of the students suspended or expelled [at

ETHS] between 1968 and 1975 were black" (Clorfene 21). Clorfene tells us that White students

responded to allegations of the school's disproportionate policing of blackness through

discourses of white victimage, complaining "that blacks were treated more leniently for similar

offenses" (21) than White students. This response works to contain the racist contradictions that

occur in school discipline by eclipsing the systematic removal of Black students from the

educational system with their own white vicitmage ('we are all victims now'). Clorfene ends

with a quote from then-principal Ray Anderson, who argued that "inconsistency in applying the

rules is not all bad"(21).

The policing of blackness in hallway spaces of schools has been well documented.

Clorfene's 1977 journal article constructs an image of hallway interactions at ETHS that directly

links trouble-making to "rough and sassy" youth – code for *Black* youth throughout the article –

who require policing:

> "The trouble comes in the form of increased acts of violence, fresh-mouthing teachers,
> unprovoked challenges, (studious kids have to learn how to cope with that and usually do so by
> ignoring the provocator), and a general sense of disorder in halls that are policed by security
> officers with walkie talkies. In fact, the guards are joined by outreach workers, counselors,
> Evanston Police Department personnel, and assistant principals in charge of discipline who daily
> deal with anything from slipping attendance to locker break ins, fights and vandalism.

> The result: A baker's dozen of experimental programs, many federally and state funded, open to
> all students but aimed at raising achievement levels of the black students, has been instituted."
> (Clorfene 19).

Returning to Ferguson's concept of identity formation through the naturalization of individual

difference we can see how both the honors students (mostly White 'studious kids') and the

frequent flyer (mostly Black 'provocators') were situated as necessarily opposite. By linking the

perceived issues of discipline with 'solutions' tied to student achievement, the school was simply repurposing one control mechanism for another, creating state and federal funded "experimental" programs such as the pull out courses for elementary school students that Ferguson (54-56) describes. This narrative usurps common sense racist imagery to advocate for white-privileging mechanisms (i.e., the tracking system), which depend heavily on the *devaluation* of people of color, as Thompson explains. In this sense, these programs contribute to racial re-segregation in schools and are part of a system of academic displacement that contains young people under the umbrella of blackness to the same level of learning and under an increased level of surveillance and control.

Much of the same could be said about the experiences and discourses that occur in ETHS's corridors today. School safety personnel and school leaders with their walkie talkies have continued the practice of walking the hallways during passing periods to make and remake an illusion of "order" and control in student movement. School resource officers, who are sworn in police officers of the Evanston Police Department, occupy a designated office space within the building throughout the day. And while this depiction of the Black male menace displaying frequent criminal and pathological behaviors in his interactions with adults and among peers is *not* the norm in my daily experiences in ETHS's hallways, this popular panic discourse circulates persistently in the community and among staff and students themselves, as shown by my earlier analysis of *Evanston Patch* comments. The practices and actions of school agents that disproportionately target Black males and result in academic displacement remain active as well.

Expanding on this, the representation of whiteness as normal in popular thought makes it possible for school agents to accept and perpetuate a symbolic privilege of "free" passage for White students in the hallways of U.S. public schools. Through his research on school discipline,

Project FUERTE[65] student-researcher Ramiro Montañez tells us that when Latin@ students are in the hallways at his high school, "going to the restroom, working on a project, or going to our locker to get something for class – we are often asked to show a pass and are questioned about our intentions" by school agents (Irizarry 165). However, when White students are in the hallways, Montañez observes how school agents make assumptions that *they* are there for legitimate reasons and thus do not subject them to the same scrutiny (Irizarry 154). The ideological systems that employ common-sense images of whiteness as naturally "innocent" positions White youth – and some token youth of color – with unremarkable, unrestricted passage in school hallways…and beyond.

Arguably, the most vigilant form of policing in school hallways occurs in the regulation over clothing, particularly Black Diasporic youth style of dress. Young men and women of color who show up as "bearers of specifically *black* cultures" (Lawrence "Roots" 54) in schools are targeted and contained under the semblance of school safety. Certain style options worn by Black and Latino males such as baseball caps and baggy pants have become signifiers of "rebellion, uncontrollability, of gang membership" (Ferguson 71) in popular culture. Clothing styles worn by Black and Latina female youths are viewed as disruptions to the ideological view of femininity situated within a "white patriarchal society" (Lawrence "Pathology" 118). Hairstyles such as the Afro, the many variations of 'natural' hairstyles, cornrows or braids, and dreadlocks, in particular, have remained "the most readily identifiable signifier of a meaningful difference" (Hebdige 144) worn by Black Diasporic female and male youths in the hallways of ETHS. Research has shown how school cultures of control make and remake the common sense image of the 'All-American' model pupil and citizen through persistent bodily discipline and the

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[65] Jason Irizarry's work on the "Latinization" of U.S public schools centers the voices of Latina/o high school students who participated in Project FUERTE, a "multiyear participatory action research project that engages Latin@ youth in urban schools in meaningful, co-constructed research while enhancing their academic skills" (52).

imposition of a normative fashion code (Ferguson 71; Morris 27; Baxter and Marina 103; Kaiser and Rebolloso McCullough 371). Because U.S. public schools are rooted in a national ideology of whiteness as normative, we can imagine that the common-sense racist imagery mobilized through the media, public opinion and by the schools themselves disproportionately positions youth cultural styles associated with the realm of blackness as "deviant" and in need of policing.

Overwhelmingly, the most persistent form of fashion policing that I have observed as a parent and school employee occurs with Black and Latino male students who wear the style of baggy and/or saggy jeans known as "sagging".[66] Throughout the school day, I have seen how young men who rock the sagging pants style at ETHS – including my son – are accosted by school agents to "pull up their pants" or "put a belt on" during their passing periods in hallways or as they enter classrooms or common spaces. These interactions disrupt the passage of the young Black and Brown male bodies, sometimes restricting their passage in a manner that makes them late to their destinations. In this sense, the day-to-day (and sometimes multiple times a day) interactions between subaltern subjects and agents of the School are rooted in persistent policing that results in *further* academic displacement of Black and Latino male youths from the learning environment. White youths, on the other hand – even the few who wear a sagged pant aesthetic – walk through the hallways unnoticed or at least unconstrained.

Montañez agrees with this observation. In his Project FUERTE research he describes the racialized nature of his school's dress code and the manner in which Black and Latino urban youth styles such as baggy pants and fitted baseball hats are policed and ultimately disciplined by school agents (Irizarry 99). He points out how the school dress code, "guised in efforts to prepare [students] for the world of work, seems to target the styles of dress employed by Latinos

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[66] For the purpose of this paper I will use Susan Kaiser and Sarah Rebolloso McCullough's definition of "sagging" to mean "wearing jeans or trousers slung low on, or below, the hips, with boxer underwear showing above" (368).

and other youth of color" (Irizarry 154) while White students with blue hair, piercings, and heavy metal t-shirts – all "un-business like" attire – go unnoticed. An informal review of several school dress codes in the Chicagoland area reveals that youth cultural styles of clothing or accessories are situated as deviant if the style options could be considered "disruptive to the educational process", "offend others", or "constitute a threat to the safety or health of students." (ETHS 41; HFHS 53; OPRFHS 18). Along with typical restrictions on style options that could be deemed offensive, dangerous, or used as weapons (studded wrist wear, spiked ankle bands, etc.), the dress code at ETHS emphasizes *specific* restrictions on Black Diasporic male youth style of dress, including "Clothing that reveals undergarments (saggy pants…)" and "Sweatbands, hats, hoods..." (ETHS 41).

Similar to the Chicagoland discourse on student dress, Edward Morris noted that a Texas middle school's "Standard Mode of Dress" document stated that the purpose of the dress code was to "ensure a safe learning environment" and "promote a climate of effective discipline that does not distract from the educational process" (32). Morris tells us that the document describes the dress code and emphasizes in bold print that "baggy and over-sized clothing *will not* be allowed" (original emphasis)" (32). Interestingly, despite ETHS's position that "the responsibility for student dress rests with the *parent* and the *student*" (ETHS 41) (my emphasis), the dress code also states that, "if there is any doubt about dress and appearance, the Assistant Superintendent/Principal will make the final decision" (ETHS 41). In the case of repeated violations, the code states that school officials have the right to confiscate the problematic clothing or accessories and impose disciplinary action on the student (ETHS 41). Thus, despite giving parental permission to my son to wear a sagged aesthetic at school, he and other students deemed in violation of the school dress code face restriction from class and thus loss of instructional time through academic displacement.

Indeed, educators in most public schools around the country link the school dress code (and thus their views on normative and deviant styles of student dress) to student conduct and discipline. At ETHS, while the dress code is designed "to maximize personal expression and style" (ETHS 41), this expression is contained within the ideological notion of respectability. In my experiences as a parent and a school worker, ETHS employees of all colors mobilize discourses of respectability in an effort teach students how to dress "well" during their time at the high school. Some of my colleagues have stated publically their desire to teach (mostly) Black male students how to dress because it is popularly thought to be a lesson that is "missing" in Black homes (and by extension, a concept that is foreign to parents of Black youth, including me). In this sense, racist common sense tropes of the inadequate family and deprived cultures of the Black Diaspora are made active through the School (and through the family and the media), reproducing respectability discourses that are consumed by well-meaning school agents, parents, and even students. These discourses suggest that assimilation through "respectable" style options will assist Black and Brown youth on their quest to gain citizenship in the school community and in the larger context of the American nation-state. At ETHS, for example, style options that are deemed respectable and normed as 'successful' for male students in popular thought include an outfit of well-fitted khaki pants, button down Polo-style shirts, and "name brand" school sweatshirts (Harvard, Yale, UCLA, Stanford, or some elite liberal arts college).

This ideological regulation over student dress was found in Morris' research at a mostly Black and Latino middle school in Texas, as well. Morris noted that educators at the school circulated racially-specific dress codes under the guise of respectability. In addition, the school held what it called a "'dress for success' day, when students were invited to dress as one might for the 'business world'" (Morris 32) and "devoted entire assemblies to instructing students on how to dress properly" (Morris 32). In returning to the concept of power we can see how

discourses of respectability, then, serve as a site through which *consensual* social relations are articulated around a common set of fixed meaning for both adults and youth in school settings. Through a lens of respectability, deviant youth cultural styles are suspended in a politics of containment that is preserved by the desire of peripheral organization members to remain included in the community of the "normal," as Iton puts it. This desire to be included in the mainstream "can translate into an avoidance of struggle and the abandonment of transformative possibilities" (Iton 13). In this sense, even without these formal modes of instruction and explicit codes, educators mobilize what Ferguson (71) calls the "unwritten rules about clothing" that remain informal so that ever-changing youth styles of dress can be dealt with at the whim of school agents. These formal and informal codes allow school agents to make ideological interpretations of *which* style options are considered violations of the code, and subsequently, *who* will be punished, and when.

In the course of this chapter we have learned how various cultural apparatuses of the state (media, police, schools, family) simultaneously mobilize control mechanisms to perpetuate dominant ideology and contain marginal subjects. By looking at the role of school dress codes we can see how school workers are positioned *through* educational policies as elite agents of the nation-state. The policies – which are continuously edited, adjusted and (re)approved by schools themselves – are activated through everyday practices such as hallway policing to contain – or displace – Black Diasporic youths when their "inadequate" families fail to regulate their stylistic choices on behalf of the school. This practice of grinding down the cultural styles of Black Diasporic youth in U.S. schools was documented more than 130 years ago at Carlisle School as one of Pratt's three reacculturation components. There, school agents required students to wear "civilized" clothing and hair styles based on White European cultural norms (Bell as quoted in Navarro-Rivera 232). School dress codes, then, are used as racially specific mechanisms to

reinforce dominant fashion norms and to target, contain, and even academically displace young

people under the umbrella of blackness who do not fit the ideal image of the All-American

worker and consumer. This is yet one more example of the many dimensions of power that are

always already in place in schools to organize the ideological structures and police peripheral

youth who do not consent to the status quo.

Youth agency and the politics of belonging

Public schools as mechanisms of modern capitalist systems employ cultures of control under

the guise of creating a *strong, positive, and safe culture* for all. Part of the effectiveness of

control cultures is the way in which multiple dimensions of power are at work to shape the ways

in which organization members develop their sense of identity and consent to dominant cultural

hegemony. During their brief time in high school, for example, young peoples' struggles to

"belong" and their basis for being privileged organization members are largely determined by

ideological discourse and institutional policies.

Locating a site of belonging in a cultural space is a particularly daunting task for any

marginal group, including youth, as the barriers to belong "may be multiple, shifting, and even

contradictory" (Carrillo Rowe "Be Longing" 18). Described as "politics of relation" by Carrillo

Rowe, these sites of belonging are political, as they "operate in relation to power: with and

through, as well as against, in resistance to, and even in directions that redefine and redistribute

it" ("Be Longing" 18). In the context of public education, questions of belonging, and of the

rights and entitlements that go with organization membership, are often constructed through the

school's – and the nation's – dominant ideology. So how, then, do young people – particularly

Black Diasporic youth – resist these structures of cultural hegemony when they have virtually no

positional or political power to refuse participation in these institutional relations? To begin, I

remain convinced that youth (and other peoples in the margin) have what Hall suggests is an instinctive understanding of their basic conditions of life and the nature of the constraints and forms of exploitation to which they are commonly subjected ("Gramsci" 21). In this sense, youth have "good sense" or the space where practical consciousness is formed. They are neither cultural dopes (Hall's term), unaware of their subjectivity, nor are they too young or too far in the periphery to have a practical consciousness to draw from.

Hall makes the case that cultural hegemony is never about "pure victory or pure domination" ("Black Popular" 106-07), but rather, it's always about "shifting the balance of power in the relations of culture; it is always about changing the dispositions and the configurations of cultural power, not getting out of it ("Black Popular" 106-07). At ETHS, for example, a Black consciousness was mobilized in the late 1970s through acts of racial solidarity "to reject the norms of what appears to be a white man's school" (Clorfene 20). According to Clorfene, Black youth identified the notion "success" to be a historically "white middle-class goal" (20) and made efforts to (re)imagine new *possibilities* for their futures. From this perspective, while young people as a generational class might be suspended in political sites of 'belonging' and legal discourses until they age out, they are not without the ability to shift the balance of power in the relations of culture as power is never truly fixed.

In addition, the possibility for youth liberation and transformation exists in popular culture. Scholars agree that popular culture *matters*, that it is an important site of people's passions, emotions, and potential resistance rooted in the experiences, memories, and traditions of 'ordinary' people (Grossberg "Mapping Popular" 78; Hall "Black Popular" 107). Here the role of the "popular" in popular culture, as Hall explains, is to "fix the authenticity of popular forms, rooting them in the experiences of popular communities from which they draw their strength,

allowing us to see them as expressive of a particular subordinate social life that resists its being

constantly made over as low and outside" ("Black Popular" 108). Situating this argument in the

context of youth culture, the experiences, memories and traditions of ordinary youth are located

in the struggle over hegemony that occurs in the popular, where they are then commodified and

stereotyped into "*profoundly* mythic" (Hall "Black Popular" 113) representations. The result is

what Hall calls a "cultural war of positions" ("Black Popular" 107) and what Grossberg explains

is "a history of struggle within and over the affective plane" ("Mapping Popular" 83). Because

there is no *fixed* content or *fixed* subject attached to popular culture, cultural struggle is at once a

historical process of "incorporation, distortion, resistance, negotiation, recuperation" (Hall "'The

Popular'" 236). To understand the experiences of Black Diasporic youth as well as their

possibilities for resistance and conformity, the construct of youth culture needs to be

(re)imagined as a multitude of responses to the cultural war of *race(d)* positions occurring in

popular culture at this particular point in time. This reevaluation, Dick Hebdige tells us,

"demands a shift of emphasis away from the normal areas of interest – the school, police, media

and parent culture" (29) (concepts I have already addressed in this paper) – to the often largely

neglected dimension of race and race relations. From this point, I will share the ways in which

youth (sub)cultural style can be imagined as a fluid space where a "cultural war of positions"

(Hall "Black Popular" 107) is constantly negotiated inside of – and on the edges of – the popular.

(Sub)cultural youth styles

   Youth cultural style is shaped through a variety of cultural sites such as home life,

neighborhoods, schools and the media. School hallways at ETHS are filled with never-ending

examples of youth cultural style options and forms of expression: the grunge-chic staple of neon

colored skinny jeans or leggings paired with plaid shirts and boots; sagged slim fitting jeans or

pants paired with vibrant undergarments, bright colored shoes, and collectible t-shirts

highlighting the latest brands and trends in pop culture; athletic apparel with school logos, colors, and mascots; pajama bottoms and hoodies; short skirts and off the shoulder tops; button down shirts paired with khakis pants and boat shoes; accessories such as costume animal tails, large white hair bows, bold earrings, funky bow ties, and bulky over the ear headphones; and, defining hairstyles such as dreadlocks, ponytails, braided hair, Afros, and hair painted in shades of purple, blue, pink and red. Hebdige references Hall and his colleagues' work on the idea of *style* to explain that, using Gramsci's concept of hegemony, "the authors interpreted the succession of youth cultural styles as symbolic forms of resistance; as spectacular symptoms of a wider and more generally submerged dissent" (80) which characterized a particular conjunctural moment. In this sense, youth cultural styles found in corridors of public high schools provide the radical contexuality necessary to understanding the forms of resistance and commodification, the various tensions and cohesions, occurring among youth and adults in school settings and at the broader level in popular culture at specific moments of time.

From here, Hebdige looks to Hall et al.'s definition of "culture" as a starting point in defining the construct of *subculture*. Hebdige tells us that by defining culture as "…that level at which social groups develop distinct patterns of life and give expressive form to their social and material…experience" (80), we can imagine "subculture" as a site through which "the expressive forms and rituals of those subordinate groups" (2) are mobilized. In the context of youth, subculture is a space where peripheral young women and men are located in the struggle over hegemony that occurs in the popular. It is here, Hebdige tells us, where the challenge to hegemony – which subculture represents – "is expressed obliquely, in style" (17). Through spectacular subcultural styles young people lift up the contradictions and objections to dominant culture "at the level of signs" (Hebdige 17). These signifiers of subcultural style appear as 'humble objects' - a costume animal tail, a hair bow, a pair of jeans – that "can be magically

appropriated; 'stolen' by subordinate groups and made to carry 'secret' meanings: meanings

which express, in code, a form of resistance to the order which guarantees their continued

subordination" (Hebdige 18). An example of this is the large hair bows that are frequently worn

by mostly Black Diasporic female youth in the hallways of ETHS. The style and manner in

which these bows are worn provides a visual connection back to the image of hair bows worn by

young schoolgirls located in the many Diasporic nations (i.e., Haiti, Jamaica, Belize) that are

represented in the particular locale of Evanston, Illinois. This expressive form of resistance by

female students under the umbrella of blackness represents a meaningful nod to their Diasporic

roots as well as their Diasporic connection to – and solidarity with – each other.

Subcultural style represents a particular "noise," as Hebdidge (90) calls it, that signifies a

different handling of the ideological and real relations through which marginal youth are

constructed. He explains that these relations "are mediated to the individual members of a

subculture through a variety of channels: school, the family, work, the media, etc." (Hebdige 81)

and are subject to historical change. In this sense, Hebdige concludes, "each subcultural instance

represents a 'solution' to a specific set of circumstances, to particular problems and

contradictions" (81). At ETHS, for example, an ordinary artifact – the cell phone – is reimagined

by Black Diasporic youths through a lens of subcultural style to lift up the contradiction that

exists with the privileging of certain music types in the school. Specifically, students under the

umbrella of blackness can be seen carrying their cell phones and other mobile devices down

hallways during passing periods in a manner that represents both a symbolic and material nod to

the boom boxes carried on Black and Brown shoulders in the 80s and 90s. In my experience,

mostly Hip Hop music styles of rap, R&B, and dub step are played from these devices at a level

that is loud enough for public consumption.

This "digital boom box" represents noise, or a 'solution' to the ideological regulation of music that occurs via the school's cultural practice of playing normative styles of music via a "Friday Song" that can be heard during hallway transitions each Friday morning. One of the equity assessment focus group participants had this to say about the Friday song tradition:

> "I've heard only one hip-hop song over the intercom since I've been here. Hip-hop culture is such a big part of this school, but we never hear the music. The school teaches us what it values as the wrong and right way to be every day" (Autrey and Cowdery 7).

This "digital boom box" solution then, as a subcultural style option, is mobilized to highlight the hypocrisy of the school's dominant culture and the institution's inability to reflect and honor the complex cultural values of the majority of its students. Despite the fact that the 'deviant' digital boom box is consistently policed and often confiscated by school agents who find the noise "disruptive," the style option continues to be spectacular part of the corridor scene. Turning once again to Hall's point about the popular culture, it is through these spectacular subcultural styles that young people have the ability to shift the balance of power in the relations of school cultures of control, as power is never truly fixed.

In hallways across the country, entanglements of fashion are performed in spectacular youth subcultures as a response to school cultures of control. Style options such as the way in which one wears her or his pants can be signified as either "deviant" or "respectable" in popular thought. By exploring the expressions of spectacular youth (sub)cultural styles we can begin to understand the significance behind the particular signs of conformation objection, and resistance to dominant ideology. Style in subculture interrupts the "process of 'normalization'" (Hebdige 18) and – like the rap sounds emanating through the digital boom boxes in school hallways – creates a noise that "offends the 'silent majority,'…challenges the principle of unity and cohesion…[and] contradicts the myth of consensus" (Hebdige 18). And because youth

subcultural styles are mobilized in spaces within popular culture, these styles become mechanisms to challenge the dominant ideology in the School and in American national discourse to a greater extent. In this sense subcultures – as sites for spectacular styles to be lifted up – serve as not only "a metaphor for potential anarchy 'out there' but as an actual *mechanism* of semantic disorder: a kind of temporary blockage in the system of representation" (Hebdige 90) (my emphasis). Through these spectacular youth styles, a school's spirit – it's normative traditions, practices, and values – is constantly interrupted and new possibilities for resisting, refusing, and (re)mixing the dominant ideology can be explored.

Perhaps the loudest mechanism of semantic disorder in school corridors and public spaces throughout the country is the sagging aesthetic worn regularly by young men of color. The sagging aesthetic – popularly associated with Hip Hop culture in youth frames of reference – signifies a spectacular Black Diasporic cultural style through which the saggin' fashion subject becomes a site of critical and creative entanglements. Through the sagging pants style the Black Diasporic subject "simultaneously reveals, conceals, and ambiguates the game of fashion" (Kaiser and Rebolloso McCullough 382) to signify a *refusal* of the process of 'normalization', as Hebdige (18) calls it. Thus, in the context of Black Diasporic saggin' youth, this spectacular subcultural style represents a *particular* Black noise against the normative style of dress and utilizes the game of fashion to obscure the racist common sense images that position young men of color as menaces in popular thought. It is now time to look at the popular construction of this spectacular subcultural style, and the ways in which saggin' can be (re)imagined as an important site where youth agency and resistance can occur.

Origins of the sagging aesthetic: a look at popular theories

The style of baggy and/or saggy jeans or pants has generated incredible mainstream cultural debate, anxiety, and regulation in discourses of popular culture, fashion, law, and education. Susan Kaiser and Sarah Rebolloso McCullough point out that discourses on the sagging aesthetic "have lacked any possibility for an *optimistic* potential toward saggers' styles as open texts or as fashion subjectivities" (369). Instead, researchers suggest that the sagging aesthetic is most commonly linked to themes of indecency (nearly showing one's ass), disrespect (for elders, women, or the community in general), defiance (of societal laws or institutional dress codes), and criminality (association with the gangster, thug, or prisoner personae) (Morris 37; Baxter and Marina 94, 99; Kaiser and Rebolloso McCullough 369; Irizarry 154). Moreover the origin of sagging style is widely associated with slavery, poverty, and – perhaps the most popularly accepted theory of origin – prison (Morris 37, 42; Baxter and Marina 99; Kaiser and Rebolloso McCullough 370-71).

The popularized theory linking sagged pants to the prison is lifted up as a recurring point of concern among school agents who seek to justify the ongoing policing of sagged pants in the hallways of ETHS for the sake of preserving the "moral decency" of those who wear the style. Mainstream explanations of the prison origin theory include common sense racist logic such as: "ill-fitting clothes, lack of belts (to prevent suicide or their use as a weapon, or to keep them from escaping), acts of defiance against prison guards…and the theme of sexual signaling" (Kaiser and Rebolloso McCullough 371). Thus, the popular theory goes, Black and Brown male bodies wear sagged pants in prison and subsequently transport this fashion style to 'the streets' – their only *possible* destination in the public imaginary – once they are released. From here, the common sense logic insists that male youth of the Black Diaspora pick up the sagging style from

a parent or other family member who are indeed ex-offenders, gangsters, or thugs. In this way, the sagging aesthetic has been used as a signifier of pathology among young men under the umbrella of blackness and their families who most certainly hail from the "male-occupied ghetto streets" (Kelley 140).

Vern Baxter and Peter Marina do very little to disrupt this narrow theory of the prison origin in their article on "Cultural meaning and hip-hop fashion in the African-American male youth subculture of New Orleans." The authors state that "sagging pants, wearing shoes without laces, and long shorts are associated with a tendency of hip-hop culture that is heavily influenced by the prison" (Baxter and Marina 99). Additionally, the authors argue that sagging reflects the "imprisonment of many young black men" (Baxter and Marina 101) in the U.S., and that the *presumed* fetishization of so-called prison styles by rappers and young people from all backgrounds "fuels mainstream fashion trends through the medium of hip hop as it reflects the experience of these [incarcerated or would-be-incarcerated Black male] youth." (Baxter and Marina 101). By linking sagging to notions of prison life and criminality, these narratives legitimize the policing of sagging – and of those populations associated with this look, such as members of Hip Hop culture – and establish a justification for the need for identity regulation or for "fashion police," as Kaiser and Rebolloso McCullough assert (371). Researchers argue that this results in an increase in institutional criminality in some communities as towns and schools pass dress codes and city ordinances to ban sagging (Morris 42; Kaiser and Rebolloso McCullough 371). These ideological depictions of Black Diasporic fashion subjects as *deprived* and *deviant* produces a narrow representation of Hip Hop culture – and Black popular culture in a broader sense – as a space that is influenced *only* by the hypermasculine criminal. In addition, this approach positions issues of violent masculinity and criminality as a problem that is *exclusive* to Hip Hop culture – and to a larger extent a problem rooted in blackness – when these

issues are, in fact, at the heart of the 'American' identity in general, as Michael Eric Dyson

makes clear (359-60).[67]

Taking this a step further, this link between blackness and criminality is often situated as

a problem about the "young" rather than a whole population. In returning to the comment

sections of *Evanston Patch* articles, one writer lifts up the racist ideological belief that "crime" is

a problem about "youth," and that, in a local frame of reference, "youth criminals" is

synonymous with Black male teenage "gang members" who no doubt attend Evanston's only

public high school. Here the commenter directly links the news headline – "Known Offenders

Threatened Student With Gun, Asked Him to Fight Outside ETHS" – to a particular race

('black'), gender ('him/he'), age ('youth', 'teenager') and criminal ('gangsters with guns'):

> **Tantor October 22, 2013 at 06:53 PM**
>
> "The police are undermanned and shackled. They may arrest a 'youth' (black teenager) with a
> gun and then a judge lets him go, sending him to rehab instead of jail. So he comes back and
> commits another crime. And so on. It is very discouraging. The logical approach would be to go
> after the leaders of the gangs…As for the Evanston authorities, they pretend there is not a gang
> problem because the gang-sters are black. Politicians and school authorities dont want to be
> called racists for going after the gangs. So they keep talking about 'guns' instead of gangs. It is
> safer for them. Open your eyes."
>
> (Fisher "Gun Threat")

The related news article offered no physical description of the alleged perpetrators other than

their gender via the use of the word "men" (which implies they are not, in fact, "youth"). Yet by

amplifying anti-black images of blackness and criminal youth, the author of this comment

constructs a narrative that associates an isolated incident with a larger socially constructed

anxiety around "black male teenage gang members with guns." To do this the commenter

employs two popular representations of Black masculinity that are lodged in racist common-

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[67] Michael Eric Dyson explains that throughout the history of popular culture in the U.S., "the violent male, using the gun to defend his kith and kin, becomes a symbol of virtuoso and redemptive manhood. Some young hip hop artists zero in on the use of the gun at the paraphernalia of *American* masculinity, as the symbol of real manhood." In this sense, he tells us, "hip hop's hyper masculine pose reflects a broader American trait" (359-60).

sense assumptions about young Black males: the Black male criminal and the endangered

species (Ferguson 77).

Ferguson argues that the endangered species and the criminal are actually mirror images that

portray male youth who fall under the umbrella of blackness as responsible for their fate (82).

She explains that crisis discourse around individual choice and personal responsibility *ignore* the

social and economic context and locates 'successes' and 'failure' as coming from within. In this

Patch article comment, Black male teenagers in Evanston – portrayed as a gun-touting gang

members who no doubt wear sagged pants to reflect their criminal bloodlines – are constructed

as both the criminal *and* the endangered species (because the "gang-sters are black" and thus

subject to kill each other). These widely-accepted images of the Black male youth criminal and

the endangered species perpetuate the racist common-sense logic that "it is their own

maladaptive and inappropriate behavior that causes [Black Diasporic males] to self-destruct"

(Ferguson 82).

Interestingly, the author of the *Patch* comment also resuscitates the link between ETHS and

the ghetto/new slum image by implying that school authorities harbor Black teenage gang

members and encourages their pathological tendencies by "talking about 'guns' instead of

gangs." Through racist common sense imagery lifted up in this panic discourse, the school is

constructed into the pipeline through which Black and Latino male teenagers wearing sagged

signifiers of their inherent pathologies will travel to meet their inevitable *criminal* fates:

academic displacement via dress code violations, prison, or death. The media, as both Hebdige

and Hall have argued, situate modes of resistance "within the dominant framework of meanings"

(Hebdige 94) by *reinserting* those youth who choose to inhabit a spectacular youth culture into

the ideological representations broadcast "on T.V. and in the newspapers, to the place where

common sense would have them fit (as 'animals' certainly, but also 'in the family', 'out of work', 'up to date', etc.)" (Hebdige 94). Thus, popular discourses about the spectacular subcultural style of saggin' simultaneously exploit and regulate the resistance created through the styling and improvisation of Hip Hop artists, fans, and wearers of specifically Black Diasporic fashion, as Kaiser and Rebolloso McCullough suggest (372). Similar to the narrow discourses that constructed the origins of the Afro – the most visible signifier of 'soul' and Black Power politics (Kelley 140) – the history of the sagging aesthetic is much more complex and entangled than these fixed representations allows.

Spectacular youth styles as resistance: (re)imagining the sagging aesthetic

The Black Diasporic subcultural style of sagging represents a *particular* Black noise against the normative style of dress in general, and, in a much larger context, against the efforts to criminalize and contain young people under the umbrella of blackness in schools and spaces throughout the country. To counter the popularized anti-black discourses about saggin' and wearers of the sagging aesthetic, Kaiser and Rebolloso McCullough draw on African Diasporic theory[68] to propose a (k)notty[69] model to describe the entanglements within fashion subjectivity. Kaiser and Rebolloso McCullough explain that through a *(k)notty* framework the material fashion – "a particular article of clothing or way of wearing clothes" (363) – and the discursive journeys of the Diaspora intersect and become entangled in the fabric of clothing to create new fashion subjects. The (k)not metaphor highlights how "stories and explanations can only be viewed as tentative and partial, as power relations both reveal and conceal multiple truths and

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[68] According to Kaiser and McCullough, "African diasporic theory offers a way to break out of oppositional thinking and evolutionary notions of progress. African American epistemologics—in conversation with other African diasporic thought—can be characterized as moving beyond either/or framework to "both/and" ways of knowing" (361). For the purpose of this paper, "African Diasporic" and "Black Diasporic" will be used interchangeably.

[69] Kaiser and Rebolloso McCullough (363) explain that "identity *nots* become identity *(k)nots* when entanglement replaces opposition and evolution as an organizing logic to account for diverse subject positions." The knot metaphor, then, provides a flexible image "accommodating to intersectionality, multiple subject positions, minding appearances and dialectical models by providing a space to consider connections and disconnections."

meanings" (Kaiser and Rebolloso McCullough 361). This focus on radical contexuality positions the Black Diasporic style of sagging as a spectacular youth subcultural style through which marginalized Black male youths simultaneously communicate their resistance and conformity to the anti-black images that have positioned them as pathological in popular discourse. The sagging aesthetic, then, becomes one that is necessarily political, and the Black Diasporic subjects who choose to "style and restyle their bodies [in sagged pants] express the complex interplay among the politics, aesthetics, and 'freshness' of fashion subjectivity" (Kaiser and Rebolloso McCullough 381).

In school hallways, entanglements of fashion are performed in spectacular youth subcultures. Spectacular subcultures provide Black Diasporic fashion subjects with a critical space to both challenge and contribute to hegemonic fashion theory. The (k)not symbolically suggests the *possibilitie*s of youths under the umbrella of blackness to transform fashion in ways that bring forth creative aesthetics – such as sagging – to "appropriate, subvert, and often out-style the traditional hegemonic aesthetic" (Kaiser and Rebolloso McCullough 376). The sagging aesthetic signifies a (k)notty performance that is witnessed in spectacular youth subcultures in schools and in urban spaces across the United States. As a Black Diasporic style found in Hip Hop culture, it re-presents the "normativity of blackness found in Hip Hop that stems from a discourse that privileges the Black body and the Black urban street experience" (Rebensdorf, 1996 as referenced in Cutler Kindle Locations 2823-30). As Cecilia Cutler explains, despite the visibility and contributions of White people in Hip Hop, "Whiteness is still marked against the backdrop of normative blackness [in Hip Hop culture]…and it is Whites who are forced to see themselves through the eyes of Black people and try to measure up to the standards of authenticity, achievement, and knowledge established by the collective of individuals who make up the Hip Hop Nation" (Cutler Kindle Locations 2823-30). In this sense, as Hall and his

colleauges suggest, sagged pants are "the 'objects in which (the subcultural members) could see their central values held and reflected' (Hall et al. as quoted in Hebdige 114-15).

Thoughts on commodification and resistance

With any discussion around fashion and style there is a necessary concern around theories of commodification and assimilation. Indeed, marginalized students' yearning to belong – to be visible to school agents in hallways and to the larger power bloc – could be grounded in a politics of *assimilation.* Through an assimilationist lens, Carrillo Rowe tells us that even though "we recognize ourselves as different, and are recognized that way by others" ("Be Longing" 33), we do not wish to emphasize those differences when we are assimilating. One way in which the notion of assimilationist belonging seems to appear in the hallways of ETHS is through the donning of Hollister Co. brand of clothing. Hollister is a brand of Abercrombie & Fitch Co. (A&F) and is popularly known to produce normalized styles of fashion envisioned through public images of White culture: lifeguards, surfing, Southern Californian beaches, and the "All-American image" (A&F 2). Using Gilroy's automobile framework, which asserts that "owning and using automobiles supplied one significant means…towards political freedom and respect" (Gilroy *Darker* 34) for Black Americans, one could suppose that for male and female youths under the umbrella of blackness, Hollister t-shirts – which are heavily branded and highly priced – represent an access point via consumer culture for an 'All-American' citizenship in ETHS and in the American nation-state, more broadly. In this way, "consumer citizenship and brand identities eclipse the merely political forms of belonging promoted by governmental institutions" (Gilroy *Darker* 21).

Yet as we have learned through the (k)notty model, Black Diasporic fashion is much more complex and entangled than this fixed representations allows. If young people of color are

always already negotiating a politics of belonging through popular culture, could the wearing of

Hollister on particularly raced bodies signify a spectacular subcultural style? Through a

framework of subculture it is possible that the appropriation of this 'humble object' of White

American identity by Black and Brown bodies is an expression of the contradictions of race and

racism in the School and even the nation in that particular conjunctural moment. Indeed, Hebdige

explains that "the relationship between the spectacular subculture and the various industries

which service and exploit it is notoriously ambiguous" (94) because subculture is primarily

concerned with consumption.

Because subculture communicates through material style options, it is difficult, as Hebdige

explains, "to maintain any absolute distinction between commercial exploitation on the one hand

and creativity/originality on the other, even though these categories are emphatically opposed in

the value systems of most subcultures" (94). In this sense, it is possible to imagine that, like the

digital boom boxes or sagging pants, the Hollister Co. t-shirt worn on Black Diasporic bodies

suggests a 'solution' to the problems and contradictions of control cultures in schools, such as

the blatant invisibility and disregard of Black Diasporic cultures in a school where students of

color are the majority. It is through these subcultural instances that Black and Brown youths can

simultaneously comply, resist and even refuse the dimensions of citizenship and status that are

"blocked by formal politics and violently inhibited by informal social codes" (Gilroy *Darker* 34).

Grewal (30) tells us that in American consumer culture, socially constructed notions of lifestyle,

'taste,' and fashion create and recreate an "American consciousness" in which consumption is

linked to democracy and choice in the struggle for full citizenship and identity in the U.S. nation-

state. Gilroy also connects consumerism and the declaration of rights (topics beyond the scope of

this paper). By reflecting on Grewal and Gilroy's points, we can begin to see how the desire for

young people of color to participate in the Hollister fantasy, don their sagging or baggy pants, or

hoist up their digital boom boxes opens up "uncomfortable prospects" (Gilroy *Darker* 64) about 'citizenship' in the United States (i.e., the prophylactic state).

It's important to note that many White youth also wear the baggy/sagged pants aesthetic as participants in subcultural spaces such as Hip Hop culture. This was especially true following the appropriation of the sagging style by fashion label Calvin Klein in 1992,[70] who used the White racialized body of Mark Wahlberg (also known as rapper "Marky Mark") to popularize the baggy/sagging look among many White consumers. However, in the particular locale of ETHS, where the dominant ideology of whiteness remains intact despite the *perceived* threat of the majority presence of blackness, sagging among White youth is not a significant trend. One could suppose that theories of whiteness as property inform White students that, in a context of being the demographic minority – in essence, a subculture itself – symbolic and material privileges are retained through the persistent replication of the normalized culture. This extends to making and remaking the image of the model pupil and citizen through respectable styles of dress. Of course as Montañez's research in school hallways revealed, the ideological construct of white supremacy extends the notion of "respectability" to subcultural style options worn by White youth – the blue hair, piercings, and heavy metal t-shirts. Thus, as Hebdige explains, subcultures are indeed expressive forms, "but what they express is…a fundamental tension between those in power and those condemned to subordinate positions and second-class lives" (132). The sagging aesthetic, when fashioned as a Black Diasporic style, then, seeks to (re)affirm the collective knowledge rooted in Diasporic experiences and future potentials of youth under the umbrella of blackness. In this light, Diaspora gives Black and Brown youth the language to identify a "politics of resistance in relation to the Diaspora" (202) as Iton explains. He continues to tell us

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[70] Source: http://www.vogue.com/voguepedia/Calvin_Klein_(Brand)

that if the prophylactic state "depends on the exclusion of certain groups, their nonrecognition as citizens, and the impossibility of their ever being members, diaspora provides a means by which these marginalizations and theographies can be recognized, contested, and profaned" (Iton 202).

Since at least the early 1990s, sagged pants have endured as a spectacular (mostly) Black Diasporic youth subcultural style, riding the wave of commodification, appropriation, subjectifcation to signify Hip Hop culture in general, and Black Diasporic unity to a greater extent. Hebdige argues that each subculture "moves through a cycle of resistance and defusion" that is situated within the larger cultural and commercial matrices" (131). And while many forms of once-deviant Black Diasporic fashion styles, including baggy/sagged pants, have been eventually rendered suitable for public consumption, the sagging pants aesthetic is worked and reworked back into a signifier of the Black male menace in popular thought. This spectacular style has caused agents of the American nation-state (educators, law enforcement, politicians, parents, media) to design oppressive laws, dress codes, and public policies carried through moral panics over "moral decency" and "safety" to immediately and persistently contain the appearance of exposed undergarments and low slung waistlines.

This politics of containment can be seen in the particularly intense desire to isolate one original meaning behind the sagging aesthetic. Kaiser and Rebolloso McCullough point out how this search for a single origin of saggin' in popular discourse actually "transforms fashion subjectivity—and challenges to hegemonic fashion norms—into a rationalization for historical patterns of discrimination and fear" (371). These discursive origin theories – slavery, prison, disregard for others – then "function to make sagging *mean* criminality or thuggishness" (Kaiser and Rebolloso McCullough 371). In this sense, the subcultural style of sagging has been lodged into the larger crisis about education, framed in the minds of educators as a key indicator of the

inadequate and pathological student, who emerges from a criminal bloodline and deprived cultures. Still, males under the umbrella of blackness refuse to "pull up their pants" as instructed by law enforcement officials, 'concerned' citizens (including friends and family members), and school agents every day – and in the context of school hallways, multiple times a day.

The wearing of sagged pants among Black Diasporic bodies signifies a *refusal* of the racially specific mechanisms deployed by U.S. cultures of control that serve to suppress critical thought and reinforce racial and classed hierarchies in an effort to sustain and promote dominant hegemonic ideologies. As Iton explains, "Diasporic identifications can be used as default mechanisms by which subjects bargain with empire or apply pressure and mobilize resources in order to achieve [an always elusive] recognition as citizens within existing or desired states" (202-03). The signification of saggin' as a Black Diasporic fashion choice constructs new possible images of success – to counter hegemonic notions of 'success' – by (re)presenting the "reigning position of African Americans as the chief artistic creators and trendsetters" in Hip Hop culture (Cutler Kindle Locations 2823-30). This (re)presentation is *particularly* important in the context of educational institutions, where young people under the umbrella of blackness – specifically males – are routinely silenced, rendered invisible and void of value in American nationalist discourse.

Iton argues that Diasporic ventures represent "an effort to establish, sustain, and institutionalize a forum for deliberation, and the interpellation of subjects, and the representation of a community that might claim priority over or alongside state identifications" (202-03). Through the sagging pants spectacular subculture, young men of color, clothed in chaos, "[produce] Noise in the calmly orchestrated Crisis" of education – "a noise which made (no)sense in exactly the same way and to exactly the same extent as a piece of avant-garde

music" (Hebdige 114-15). As Iton concludes, Diaspora signifies an enduring "commitment to a form of resistance: an attempt to forge and maintain connections among those disconnected, disturbed, and unsettled in a particular fashion by the intersection of coloniality and race" (202-03). Within the lens of Diaspora, Black Diasporic ventures such as wearing sagged pants, white hair bows, and even Hollister gear can be reimagined as a long-term commitment on behalf of young people of color to resist, refuse, and even (re)mix the assimilationist efforts that have been mobilized against them through the School and other cultural institutions of the nation-state.

Throughout my experiences as a parent, I have witnessed the routine policing and verbal scoldings that my son – and other youth who are also bearers of blackness – has endured in school hallways, in crowded restaurants, and on public streets in the name of "moral decency." He is popularly constructed as a signifier of Black masculinity – sometimes the 'criminal' but *always* the 'endangered species'. He is at once suspicious as he is deviant under the watchful gaze of these ideological enforcers. Makeshift posters and formal signs are plastered in public spaces – including schools – to inform sagging youths that their pants must be pulled up in order to enter. And yet the sagging pants are kept low, the undergarments stay exposed, and the sagging aesthetic remains situated as a political site in popular culture. Thus, to borrow from Hebdige, while other "original innovations which signify 'subculture'" (95) have been rendered into commodities for public assumption and subsequently "frozen" in their symbolic relevance, the sagging aesthetic has continued to (re)mix the responses by control cultures, shape panic discourses, and symbolize Black Diasporic solidarity among mainly male youths for more than 25 years. By radically contextualizing the conscious choices of Black and Latino youth to wear Hollister, lower their sagging pants, or hoist up their digital boom boxes, we will better understand their capacity and determinedness to shift the balance of power in the relations of control cultures. It is through this production semiotic disorder – through the wearing of

spectacular subcultural styles – that we can (re)imagine remarkable futures and fresh possibilities

for youth. It is through this 'noise' that we can hear young peoples' *solutions* to the

contradictions of hegemony and their desires to (re)mix their subjectivity in this war of positions.

Chapter 5: Conclusion and Implications

Over the last few years my romanticized picture of orchestrating a grassroots social justice movement through school communications faded into the harsh realization that I, as a school employee, was always already an integrated agent of the capitalist state. I have spent many nights struggling with the complex dimensions of my role in school communications that necessarily requires me to both counter _and_ sustain the role and presence of whiteness and white supremacy in control at ETHS. Through this work I have no doubt perpetuated a racist common sense logic that makes and remakes public images of blackness that subordinate and dehumanize my son – and every student who is a bearer of Black Diasporic culture. However, to paraphrase Bell (31), understanding my subjectivity has lead to new possibilities and future approaches rather than despair.

I return to Grossberg's framework for cultural studies to suggest that the movement among educators to address the issues of racial inequity education requires a (re)mix of school cultures of control and the white-privileging mechanisms that support them. This will require radical contextualization of what is already known about schooling and brought to life through educational theories in order to avoid creating and re-creating the same systems of power and privilege that those working in education seek to deconstruct. Grossberg points out that cultural struggles – which are part of a larger struggle against liberal modernity ("Cultural Studies" 15) – "are understandable only when their articulation to the hegemonic struggle is made clear" ("Cultural Studies" 13). In this sense, to understand the ways in which young people participate in and resist school cultures of control – particularly the consumption and production of the ideological 'All-American' identity – my career in communications in the realm of public education must include radical contextuality and a conjunctural analysis of the _positionality_ of

youth in school cultures with respect to the entirety of their social, political, economic and material relations. By (re)locating my work in school communications through a larger framework of cultural studies I am able to open up to new possibilities and alternative futures for public education. Here I can wield my weapon of the personal narrative to reveal the complexities, contingencies, contestations, and multiplicities that help challenge and deconstruct the "theoretical and political baggage" (Grossberg "Cultural Studies" 6) we carry with us.

From this perspective, while my colleagues and I are positioned *within* the framework of our employer's dominant ideology – and, to a larger extent, *within* the capitalist structure – we are not completely without the autonomy and ability to resist, refuse, or remix traditional theories on education, in general, and ETHS's cultural values, traditions, practices and policies in particular. In my own role I have battled racial injustice and the particular policing of bodies in numerous ways, such as spearheading the removal of the words "saggy pants" in the dress code section of the school's student handbook. With this small yet radical change, the reference to this particular raced and gendered signifier of Black Diasporic subcultural style no longer exists. This opens up possibilities for other staff members to (re)imagine new interactions with students of color in the hallways, specifically Black male students. No longer are staff *required* via the written dress code policy to target and police saggy pants. Through this discursive act the rationalization for historical patterns of discrimination and fear among White organization members towards the looming Black male menace can be dissolved and alternative modes of intergroup and interracial interaction can be realized.

In addition, by (re)locating my work in school communications through a larger framework of cultural studies I am able to look at the *experiences* of marginalized groups in general and youths under the umbrella of blackness in particular through a lens of radical contextualization

that requires me to decenter theories and constructs of whiteness – my own whiteness – every day. For example the tendency to normalize White youths as individuals and group Black youth into one essentialized marginal group can be disrupted through Hall's argument that we must focus on "the diversity, not the homogeneity, of black experience" ("Black Popular" 111) in order to avoid the tendency to essentialize the experience of Black youths. Hall urges us to appreciate not only "the historical and experiential differences within and between communities, regions, country and city, across national cultures, between diasporas," but also to recognize that Black people "are always in negotiation…with a series of different positionalities…[that each have a] point of profound subjective identification" ("Black Popular" 112). This is particularly important for me as a White women looking at the particular realities of Black Diasporic youth at ETHS vs. the United States.

Hall reminds us that there is no guarantee that an "essentialized racial identity" – such as academically 'successful' Black students – will turn out to be mutually liberating for all Black people ("Black Popular" 112). Using radical contextuality in the hallways of ETHS, my colleagues and I can (re)imagine the white hair bows worn by Black females as a powerful symbol of Diasporic journeys. Instead of imaging a pathologic origin of the sagging aesthetic, we can visualize this spectacular subcultural style as a form of noise that should be listened to, as a sign of resilience and resistance passed on by generations of subaltern peoples.

Returning to the description of my earliest interactions in hallway spaces, it is now possible to imagine new meaning behind these performances – the casual cursing mixed with elusive slang and vernacular languages, the disruption of space via mobile devices. Through a construct of spectacular youth subculture I am able to *refuse* the anti-black framework that insidiously invades my common sense logic that seeks to position whiteness and White cultural modes of

expression as normal and natural. Now, instead of situating these performances of language and style in hallways as deviant and pathological, I am able to *remix* them as negotiations of – and possible solutions to – hegemony that need to be heard. Additionally, by actively and consciously decentering whiteness in the school culture, in local cultural networks, and in my own frames of reference, I am able to look at the ways in which White people are also oppressed and contained within the hegemonic structures of school cultures of control. Bell tells us that throughout the American experience, "the ideology of whiteness continues to oppress whites as well as blacks" (31). This reflexivity has been critical to me. As pointed out in the experiences I have shared as both a school agent and a White mother of young man of color, the inherent privileges afforded to White racialized bodies are not guaranteed. Ideological systems of power exist to contain and subsequently police <u>all</u> peoples who resist, refuse or attempt to (re)mix the ideological construct of whiteness.

Furthermore, through a framework of cultural studies my work in school communications can be expanded *beyond* the ideological constructs of the institution to explore what is *really* going on. In this sense, my research does not "look the other way" in the name of academic equity and ignore those "subtle forms of bias" that occur in the culture of ETHS, as Alson mentions. It does not deny the culture of control and the related white-privileging mechanism that have continued to damage students of color and their parents. These subtle forms of bias appear in local narratives and hallway conversations, face-to-face interactions, letters and emails, school publications, district policies and guidelines, local news stories, public comments, and thick cultural networks. These subtleties create a particular narrative about *'who'* is valued at ETHS and why, perpetuating an ideology that excludes all groups outside the norm and realm of whiteness and shaping the way in which the school is viewed by students, their families, and the community at large. What Ferguson, Grossberg, Hall, Hebdige, Iton and others suggest for the

future of school communications is to go beyond the cultural struggles of the particular institution to understand their articulation to the larger hegemonic struggle (Grossberg "Cultural Studies" 13).

To understand the ways in which young people consume and participate in the media I produce and other forms of textural culture, Grossberg explains that I must critically explore "new conceptions of space and spatial identities, at every level (global, regional, national, state and local)…New modes of individualization (in terms of identity communities, and corporations…), new structures of social belonging (new relations of the demos and ethnos), and…transformations of the very notions and experiences of history and temporality" ("Cultural Studies" 17). Grossberg concludes that these constructs are transforming the structures of social life and reality and are crucial in the effort to "imagine alternatives and organize change" ("Cultural Studies" 17). Specifically, how will these new modes, technologies, and structures impact the sites where youths participate in consumer culture and the ways in which their cultural identities are formed? Thus, by (re)locating my work in school communications through a larger framework of cultural studies I am better able to understand the impact of the organic crisis in the U.S. and critically examine the discursive formations of the economies, as Grossberg calls them, that have privileged capitalism, consumerism, and consumption as "the new logic of rational choice" ("Cultural Studies" 16). This framework gives young people, parents, and educators a space to amplify weapons of voice against the master narrative, against the dominant ideology and mechanisms of control that repress school agents and situate youth of color and their families as deficient, marginal, and pathological. It is here that we can (re)imagine spectacular subcultural youth styles as a loud 'noise' that seeks to resist, refuse, and (re)mix the School's ideological 'spirit' and generate new possibilities for belonging.

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Appendix

1.1 The structure of education in the United States:
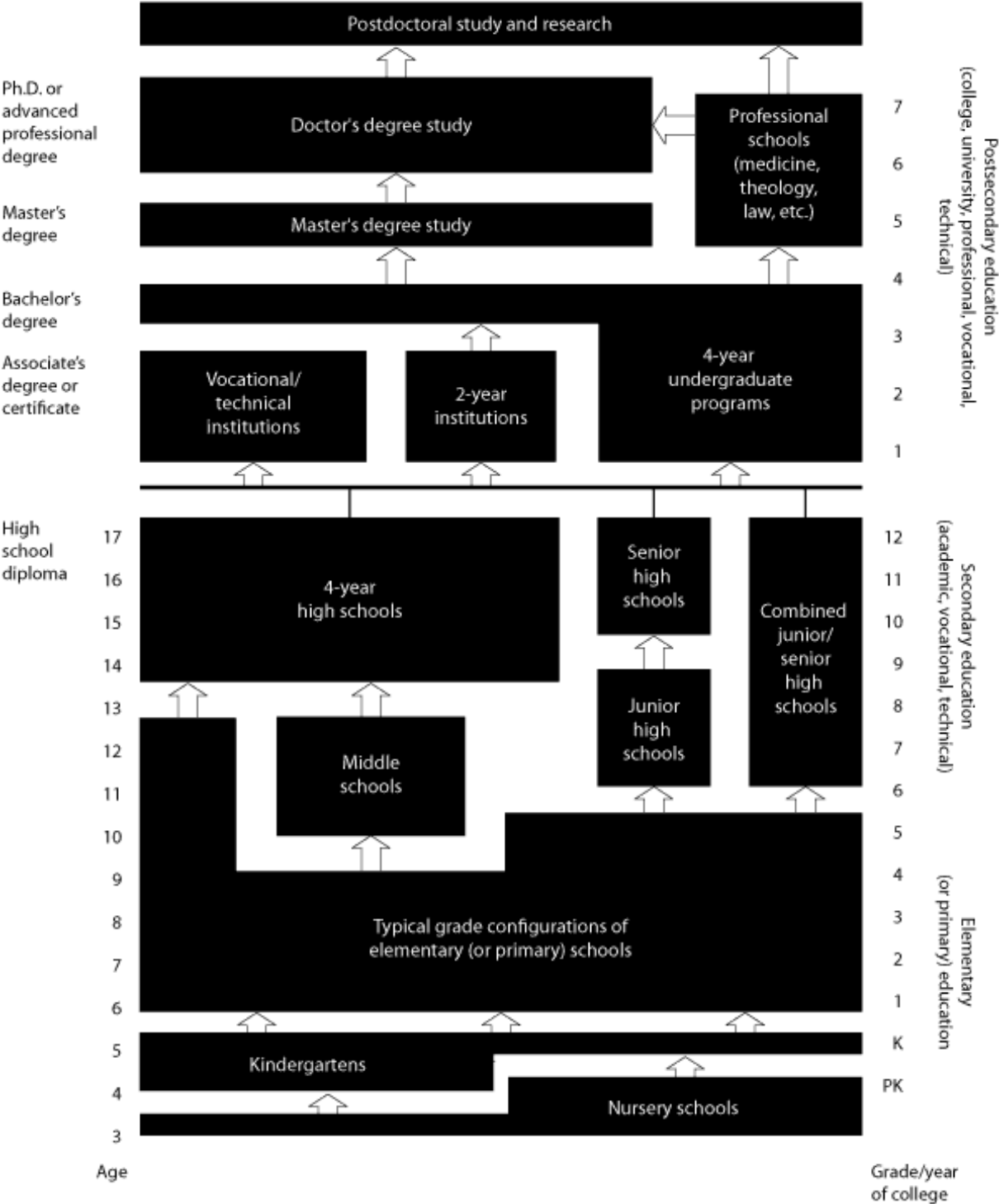
Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Annual Reports Program.
http://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d11/figures/fig_01.asp?referrer=figures