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High-Profile School Shootings:
How violence is hidden in masculinity expectations

By

Jessica S. Klein

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Sociology in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New York

2002

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This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in Sociology in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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Abstract**HIGH-PROFILE SCHOOL SHOOTINGS: HOW VIOLENCE IS HIDDEN IN
MASCULINITY****BY****JESSIE KLEIN****Advisor: Stanley Aronowitz**

Between 1996 and 2001, 14 boys from suburban and rural communities killed 39 people and wounded 92 in school shootings across the nation; fatalities included 32 children, 14 boys, and 18 girls. Two patterns emerged among these cases that thus far have been overlooked by the media. These boys responded to one or both of the following behaviors. They targeted other boys they called “preps and jocks” who attacked their masculinity by calling them “gay” and/or they aimed at girls who had rejected them. When these boys stated their motives they said they meant to seek revenge on boys who teased them and girls who refused them: boys who attacked their masculinity and girls who rejected it. They communicated these complaints in manifestos, videos, and school essays, and to friends, parents, and teachers. Yet everything but gender was blamed. The media highlighted the most common explanations: *gun control laws*, *violence in the media*, *bad parents*, *evil character*, and the belief that there was *no explanation* at all. The role of gender was almost entirely absent in media analysis of these crimes. The “boys will be boys” explanation made it possible to miss the “warning signs”; their reactive violence and rage were perceived instead as normal aspects of their masculinity. This thesis analyzes media reports of these crimes in order to explore why the role of gender continues to be overlooked even as it emerges consistently as a motivating factor.

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This dissertation documents the responsibility a society has to the individuals that comprise it. In the same way, every individual success is founded on the support of the many people who have worked together to help make the accomplishment a reality.

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

Thesis

In a time of unparalleled prosperity, 14 boys committed 12 school shootings in relatively wealthy, suburban communities. Between 1996 and 2001, in Washington, Alaska, Mississippi, Kentucky, Arkansas, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, Oregon, Colorado, and California, 39 people were killed, and 92 were wounded in these crimes; fatalities included 32 children, 14 boys and 18 girls. In the late 20th century, and early 21st century, the United States was experiencing an economic boom of extraordinary proportions. The boys who killed were generally from wealthy families, living in so-called safe zones--suburbia. According to American expectations and myths, they represented the typical successful profile--male, white, wealthy--on the right trajectories for fulfilling lives and careers. As each year passed, and affluence expanded in these communities, the number of casualties and wounded children increased in these high-profile incidents. The horrific form of violence manifesting during this time challenges the economic determinist view that wealth and American education combine to create healthy and happy individuals distinct from the "culture of poverty" found in urban areas. A culture of alienation, rage, violence, suicide and homicide is increasingly evident, and yet undetected, in wealthy neighborhoods, as well as poorer ones, all over the United States. In the eighties, suicide was the second leading cause of death among young people under the age of 25. Today it is homicides (Gaines, 1998, 107 and Spina 2000, 1).

The belief that economic success necessarily leads to advantage becomes problematic. Contemporary cultural norms and common sense simultaneously create

wealth for some, while spreading widespread distorted values and expectations for all. The founding principles of American democracy and egalitarian society are potentially threatened by these distortions, replaced with increasingly disturbing values and outcomes. By examining the 12 high-profile school shootings that took place between 1996 and 2001--the most horrific, unprecedented school violence in American history--a magnification of the *common sense* underlying much contemporary school and other violence becomes visible. Specifically, the role of gender emerges as a major theme in these cases, and the expectations associated with masculinity in particular.

The boys who killed responded to one or both of the following behaviors and attitudes. They targeted boys who they referred to “preps and/or jocks” that called them “gay” and/or they aimed at girls who rejected them. These boys individually stated their intentions loud and clear. They meant to seek revenge on boys who teased them, and girls who refused them: boys who attacked their masculinity and girls who rejected it. They communicated these complaints in manifestos, videos, and school essays, and to friends, parents, and teachers. Yet when the school shootings occurred, everything but gender was blamed. The media highlighted the most common explanations: *gun control laws, violence in the media, bad parents, evil character*, and the belief that there was *no explanation* at all. (One study showed percentages: Guns: 23%; Parents 16%; Media 29%, Other 33%; (*Media Monitor*, 1999). As individual cases the media reported each shooting as a reaction to “preps and jocks” who bullied these boys and called them “gay,” and/or as a specific response to “all the girls who had broken up” with them. Yet, the role of gender was completely absent in media analysis of these crimes. Widespread denial buttressed by social institutions and *common sense* made it possible to actually

print the boys' own explanations side by side with declarations attributing the crimes to everything but the boys' own stated intentions.

This thesis analyzes media reports of these crimes in order to explore why the role of gender continues to be overlooked even as it emerges consistently as a motivating factor. The relationship between contemporary laissez-faire-type capitalism and gender is crucial, and specifically the escalating expectations for men to *buy* masculinity, just as women have historically been pressured to *buy* femininity. Cultural expectations for men to be bigger, stronger, and more aggressive than ever before are indicated in myriad advertisements advocating weight loss for men, dietary supplements, hair loss products, and other new expensive accoutrements necessary for referencing adequate manhood. Eating disorders and addictions to such products and services, previously the predominant domain of women, are growing now for men as well. Potentially dangerous hormones are now widely marketed for a new condition called "andropause"—the male version of menopause—to help aging men enhance their muscle tone, strength, athletic ability, and libido (Groopman, 2002). The escalating media marketing towards "masculinity" products increases the pressures towards unattainable masculinity expectations.

Masculinity values are consistent themes in the school shootings. Young boys can feel devastated when compared to women or homosexuals or when they experience rejections by girls in a culture escalating its demands for demonstrating manhood. The distance between their efforts to develop the expected attributes of masculinity and their potential failures at this task cause increased alienation and despair. Men sometimes use violence to try to prove that such affiliations with femininity are incorrect. As a symbolic

form, violence is a means of demonstrating masculinity in the face of these social doubts.

The following vignettes introduce some of the characters and concerns in these cases:

The two boys in Colorado (1999) who took over Columbine High School, killing 15 people, including themselves, were relatively powerless in their daily lives. "They were pushed against lockers and had rocks and even lunchroom mashed potatoes thrown in their face," reported one member of their social group, The Trench Coat Mafia (Wilgoren, "Society of Outcasts Began with a \$99 Coat," 1999). Eric Harris, age 18, and Dylan Klebold, age 17, were regularly called homosexual, a reference widely considered humiliating in their high school community (Barron, 1999). They fought back on April 20, 1999, in an effort to act on Hitler's birthday. Luke Woodham, age 16, had a similarly violent reaction when he shot and killed his ex-girlfriend and her best friend at his school on October 1, 1997, in Pearl, Mississippi. He also said he was tired of being called "gay" Cloud, "Of Arms and The Boy"). Woodham explained:

Throughout my life I was ridiculed. Always beaten. Always hated. Can you, society, truly blame me for what I do (*New York Times*, "Teenagers Charged With Plotting to Kill in Satanic Campaign," 1997)?

Between these two cases and among all the others there are three central and sanctioned male behaviors this research exposes as inextricably entwined in masculinity expectations: misogyny, homophobia, and violence itself. The boys in all twelve cases seemed to consider it normal to violently defend themselves against perceived attacks on their masculinity. Thus the intention of this project is to uncover the violence within "normal" socialized masculinity. The cycle of violence within the culture of masculinity

becomes increasingly apparent as the boys who killed emerge as both the victims of masculinity violence as well as its devastating, but “triumphant” victors.

The widespread denial regarding these expectations, and the ravaging consequences of such *common sense* is examined to uncover the ideological underpinnings disguising these desolate norms. The guidelines inherent in masculinity constructions are revealed as more insidious, more powerful, and more pervasive, than the force of more visible and direct methods of oppression. This thesis explores: Why violence is used as a response to perceived injustices, how the role of masculinity is implicated, as well as how typical responses can contribute to the underlying problems within these masculinity expectations.

The boys who killed have all been punished by the court system. They have generally been charged as adults and sentenced to life in prison. Demands for severely prosecuting the individual casualties of our country’s disturbing pathologies may or may not ameliorate the grief of the victims. Focus on individual retribution does, however, deflect attention away from the larger social issues, desperately in need of social change. The punitive “bad seed” perspective implies that removing these *deviant* individuals from society is enough to re-create safe spaces for children. I argue that these kinds of methods mostly contribute to a culture of denial and obfuscate the need for focusing on a dynamic transformation of cultural norms. (One study showed that 45% blamed society, and 55% blamed the individual; *Media Monitor*, 1999).

Research Framework

The specific definition of a school shooting is somewhat ambiguous, and the definition changes with the source addressing the crime. For the purpose of this study, there are four categories of school shootings:

1. *Single-homicide*: an individual is targeted and killed.
2. *Multiple-victim- no deaths*: indiscriminate shooting; some individuals may be targeted; no children or adults killed.
3. *Multiple-homicide –adults killed*: indiscriminate shooting; some individuals may be targeted; no children killed; one or more adults are killed.
4. *Multiple-homicide –children and sometimes adults killed*: indiscriminate shooting; some individuals may be targeted; one or more children killed; may also include adults.

Because the available resources on school shootings make many different and contradictory lists constituting “the school shootings” in a given period, this project focuses on the fourth category-- these have been the highest profile cases to date. This dissertation highlights all eight *Multiple-homicides*, revealing most clearly the anger directed not just at individual peers, but also at the social and economic system and its representatives. It helps to explain why these shootings took place, why their victims were targeted, and what can be done in both the short and the long term to abate this violence.

For further clarification violence is understood as Stanley Aronowitz describes in his article “On Violence” as: “someone has been physically assaulted by another” (Aronowitz, 2002, 211). Aronowitz makes the distinction from what is called “symbolic violence” or “linguistic violence” that may cause “hurt feelings, bears on self-esteem, and

so forth” (Ibid.). These terms will be used to distinguish between these concepts in the course of the thesis. Pierre Bourdieu describes “symbolic violence” as that which includes the deep, even physical internalization of masculinity expectations (Bourdieu, 2001); this project helps to explain how this type of “symbolic violence” increasingly manifests in the kind of violence to which Aronowitz refers. The latter speaks to acts of intimidation and life threatening circumstances on the rise, and in need of close attention and address. The former remains in the category of social relations that take place between men, between men and women, in schools, and throughout society where unequal power relations reside (Aronowitz, 2000). “But,” says Aronowitz, even though the subtext of many instances of “symbolic or linguistic violence” is the “possibility that the loser may be subject to force, the moments of involuntary detention, torture, and the prospect of death are qualitatively different from ‘symbolic or linguistic violence’ and its consequences” (Aronowitz, 2002, 212). There is then a continuum rather than a categorical break between language and force, but the far ends are qualitatively distinct (Ibid.). The cases examined here concern school shootings ending in multiple fatalities and injuries. The hope is to discuss the cultural pressures or “symbolic violence” that might have incited these acts, thereby challenging/ reducing violence in its starkest form.

A chart of the names, ages, places, and numbers of victims killed and wounded, along with many common characteristics discernible among all the case studies, can be found in the appendix, and should serve as a helpful account of the individual vagaries among these cases. The references in this chart have been largely documented in the body of the dissertation; for sake of clarity they do not appear within the chart itself. When relevant information was unavailable the chart box is left blank. Specific quotes from the

boys who killed or from those acquainted with them are used as examples in some of the categories. These statements have generally appeared in context in the body of the text in a number of different places. One quote can convey many interesting facets of a case; thus they reverberate for further analysis throughout the dissertation as they relate to a particular section.

What is most astonishing in this chart, however, is the similarities among these shootings and the themes that emerge at quick glance: The boys were generally from outsider groups; admired alternative ideologies like Hitler, Nietzsche, and Satan; were mostly smart and computer savvy; mostly came from two-parent traditional families; possessed huge arsenals of guns and bombs in their bedrooms; publicly announced their plans to commit the school shootings prior to the act; and almost all were tried in adult court and committed to multiple life prison sentences. Most interesting for this project is how this chart reveals that many of the boys responded *both* to rejection by a girl(s), and specific attacks on their masculinity by boys they referred to as “preps and jocks.” Finally, the number of deaths and casualties in each school shooting is shown as steadily increasing. This chart makes evident the consistent themes among these cases tragically overlooked by the media.

Thus far, media explanations concerning the shootings have been largely contradictory and superficial. Efforts to scapegoat single-issues as the unifying cause of school shootings tend to obscure the more complex social problems underlying these incidents. The most popular causes include *gun control laws, violence in the media, bad parents, bad character, and chance, no explanation at all*. Such one-dimensional explanations threaten to prescribe inadequate responses that only address the symptoms

of the more pervasive cultural pathologies that then go dangerously unexamined. The tendency towards single answers may seem comforting in that it creates a perception of control less accessible in more complex and multi-faceted analysis; the more complex motivations underlying these crimes are then lost at high cost.

This research examines the fundamental social problems that may have contributed to the school shootings and that may also infect each of these five common explications. Unrecognized patterns among these cases are highlighted and explored to shed light on the daily dynamics and cultural life endemic to these crimes. In eight *multiple homicides* where children and adults were killed, the shooters expressed fairly identical motivations, and in an additional four other shootings (including *multiple victims-no deaths*, *multiple homicide-adults killed*, and *single homicide*) during this time period the young male gunmen stated similar provocations. These patterns reveal that school shootings have social themes and that they are not necessarily the work of single-issue external factors or “bad apples.” This project explores the hypothesis that these boys were engaged in a form of rebellion, trying to become the new representatives of masculinity in their schools, as well as the actors who imposed or represented this *ideology*, instead of the objects highlighting this distinction for others. The boys who killed battled a cultural hegemony where high school boys are expected to be physically and institutionally powerful, or risk relentless abuse and humiliation. The boys’ oppositional responses, however, in the end magnified the same masculinity imperatives that seemed to infuriate them in the first place. Killing others who they believed abused them became an immediate source of a new masculinity gratification.

Dissertation Contents

This Introduction seeks to state clearly the absence of adequate understanding and solutions for addressing the recent spate of school shootings in the United States. It highlights the significance of gender analysis in this investigation, and the problem with previous studies thus far. The remarkable absence of gender analysis in media or scholarly accounts and the relationship to economics is made problematic and introduced as culpable factors in these crimes.

The methodologies used in this project are also explained here: a combination of isolating and analyzing common characteristics among the crimes and conducting a media analysis and critique of other cultural documents. A chart of the eight central case studies as well as four others is first referenced in the Introduction, and can be found in the appendix of the dissertation. The significant characteristics of each shooting are framed to develop familiarity with the main characters and the consistent themes among these cases.

In the second chapter the literature review engages the question: How do popular explanations--*gun control laws, violence in the media, working parents, bad character, and chance*--relate to these cases? Each popular cause is explored in depth as a cause for these crimes. The contradictory research concerning whether gun control laws are too lax or too strict and whether violence in the media causes or does not cause violence is extrapolated here. The different types of familial arrangement considered causal in these crimes, and the possibility that character is a significant factor is also studied here. The "no explanation" response is explored while it engages the ideas that the boys who killed seemed to try to make their explanations clear. The underlying masculinity issues within

these five frameworks, as well as the recent but still limited research on the role of masculinity in school shootings is also extrapolated here. The escalating homophobia and misogyny visible in these cases and the relationship to contemporary laissez-faire-type is also explored and made visible.

Chapter three engages the question: What is the relationship between the boys' involvement in outsider groups and the masculinity status-hierarchies in their schools? The anatomy of their outbursts is investigated in relation to race and class issues and their intersection with masculinity status-hierarchies. Michel Foucault and Hannah Arendt are used to explain the impact of ideological status-hierarchies, and the boys' violent responses to perceived injustice, respectively. Emile Durkheim helps explain how an increasingly deregulated society, and unattainable expectations, visible in these microcosmic cases, can breed conditions ripe for anomie. Recalling that suicide was the second leading cause of adolescent death in the eighties, and homicide is the second leading cause today, this analysis is particularly illuminating. Max Weber and Bourdieu provide further insight on status-hierarchies as a lens on larger social conflicts.

The fourth chapter addresses most specifically: How do these crimes relate to gender in general—masculinity in specific—and in particular *misogyny*, *homophobia*, and the *violence of normality* as well as *the normality of violence* in masculinity? The violence of normality is developed to explain how masculinity as a social construction becomes a method of institutionalizing violence and hatred in mainstream society. Bourdieu and Robert W. Connell are used as theoretical frameworks to explicate the structure of contemporary masculinity expectations and then to understand how such constructions are implicated in the school shootings.

The fifth chapter explores and summarizes some themes in this project through a cultural analysis of the recent film, *Minority Report* (2002), as well as a few other current and forth-coming films. Then the most common social, legal, and political responses to school shootings are addressed within the framework this cultural analysis develops. Reflecting on past efforts to address juvenile crimes, the effects of current public policy are explored, and other recommendations are considered for the prevention, intervention, and correction of these crimes. Statistics regarding youth homicide, violence against women, and international comparative data help to further illuminate the magnitude of this social problem. The focus here highlights the differences between responses that seem to work, and those “solutions” that may be aggravating the crimes themselves. My own troublesome experiences with school safety policy as a Guidance Supervisor in a small New York City public high school are also engaged here.

The concluding chapter summarizes the arguments in this thesis beginning with the proposition that these boys seemed to believe there was *no exit*, in Aronowitz’s words (Aronowitz, 2000), to the ideological constraints and status-hierarchies they felt trapped by, but unable to articulate. The invisible chains of this oppression in the guise of “normal” masculinity expectations left these boys with what appeared to them as no apparent alternatives. This chapter also charts the increase in unattainable masculinity expectations impregnating contemporary popular culture, and engages its relationship with increasingly *laissez-faire* economics. I conclude with both short-term and long-term recommendations for transforming the social and cultural norms that provoke these crimes.

Methodologies/Theoretical Framework

A media and cultural analysis is used in this project to examine the consistent characteristics reported among these shootings. Information about these cases is drawn from the primary source manifestos many of the boys left to explain their crimes, as well as media interviews reported just after the massacres occurred. Foucault is used to understand the oppressive impact of the ideological construction of masculinity. Arendt helps explain why violence relating to masculinity emerges as a response to perceived injustice. Bourdieu helps further extrapolate the construction of masculinity, and Connell delineates specific categories of masculinity that appear consistently among these cases.

I purposely did not interview the boys and other community members involved in these cases. I was concerned that while the boys stated their motivations clearly in interviews and manifestos at the time they committed their crimes, now their explanations would be biased by too many factors. The families of the victims--many who are suing the killers' families--may be invested in portraying the boys in one-dimension, while relatives and friends of the perpetrators may present a more positive characterization with the ulterior motive for acquiring future parole. People have since interviewed the boys, including psychiatrists, journalists, lawyers, police, parents, friends, and many others. New theories presented to the boys may have influenced them so much that they developed new perspectives about their own intentions. For instance, Luke Woodham (Mississippi 1997) was adamant in his written and verbal statements at the time of his massacre that he "acted on behalf of all kids who are mistreated." "Mr. Myrick, I've been wronged. The world has wronged me and I just couldn't take it anymore," he explained to the Assistant Principal that subdued him at the scene of the

crime (Sack, 1997 and Lacayo, 1998). One month later on Diane Sawyer's ABC news program, *On Air*, Woodham insisted instead that he killed because he had not found God (Sawyer, 1998), a theme that was probably presented to him repeatedly after the shooting. This explanation was entirely absent from Woodham's own declarations at the time of his shooting, but seemed to emerge as a response to pressure from others to interpret his violence differently.

Therefore journalistic re-presentations made closest to the crimes themselves and primary source manifestos are the main source of information for this project. Of course, writers and dominant trends in popular culture also bias media reports. Media is powerfully persuasive, and tends to influence culture as well as reflect it. Therefore, even though the consistent themes relating to masculinity--boys attacking "preps and jocks" who called them gay, and boys targeting girls who rejected them—emerge in individual media accounts of each shooting, the role of gender was entirely absent in their analysis.

Thus, the media influences people by what they leave out, as much as by what they print. The public may hear the quotes from these boys relating to gender, but the media interpretations of these comments do not reflect gender issues. Consequently, the culpable gender dynamics and expectations remain invisible even as they are clearly articulated by the boys who killed.

A lack of gun control laws and violence in the media were the most popular causes attributed to these crimes despite the fact that the themes of gay bashing and violence against girls in all the massacres appeared when analyzing disparate accounts. Thus these reports serve as essential resources for acquiring the basic information

necessary for this research even as they reflect the bias of the popular culture and individual reporter. Through a media analysis, such documents contribute to this thesis by documenting the boys' own words regarding why they killed, as well as the counter-proposals presented in journalistic accounts.

While my intention is to uncover the violence within *normal* socialized masculinity, this work is complicated by the fact that it investigates the boys' conscious motivations for these crimes, as well as the social imperatives and underlying motivations that seemed to compel them to commit these acts. Therefore, how and which stories are told becomes further fuel for analysis. The subjects, therefore, are not just the boys per se, but more significantly the society that helped create them.

George E. Marcus and Michael J. Fischer in *Anthropology As Cultural Critique*, caution that: "Problems of description become problems of representation" (Marcus and Fischer, 1986, 9). These subjects can be described but simultaneously they are re-presented from a biased perspective, using a language that has ultimately contributed to the socialization that is at the same time being critiqued. In addition to the boys who are central to these cases, the culture that created them is analyzed, a culture of which I am also a part. This study is further challenged by the fact that at this writing, new research concerning masculinity and its destructive impact is still being released. The investigation, then, engages "the process of change itself" (Ibid. 15) as society struggles with these only recently accessible ideas. For this reason, gender issues are also examined as they relate to my own circumstances.

My past work as a Guidance Supervisor in a New York City public school engages a somewhat different culture of violence and masculinity than that experienced

by the suburban/rural boys in this study. But, comparisons between these cultures help to reveal my participation in this culture while expanding an understanding of the different ways masculinity is produced. I include a number of relevant experiences I have had in thirteen years as a teacher, psychotherapist, and Guidance Supervisor in New York public schools. Gay bashing, sexual harassment and retaliatory violence is also common in New York City schools. Many of my students have expressed their intolerance towards homosexuals, and others have been the victims of such hostility and the real violence that followed these attitudes. Whether gay or straight, the psychic injury at being attacked as homosexual is considered by many of the students with whom I have worked as the most intolerable of all the insults they endure. The reactive indignation and often violence to these attacks is part of what is explored in this project. Why are boys so sensitive to these particular kinds of epithets? Where do these attitudes develop from, and then how can they be challenged effectively?

In short, this project proposes to examine the boys' motivations, as well as the cultural implications of socialized masculinity, through a lens that in Marcus and Fischer's words: "aims to disturb cultural self-satisfaction." Substantive analysis ultimately has "a marginal or hidden agenda of critique of their own culture, namely, the bourgeois, upper-middle class life of mass liberal societies, which industrial capitalism has produced" (Ibid. 111). The boys in these cases almost uniformly came from white bourgeois cultures. Therefore the role of class and race are also engaged.

To adequately examine these cases, it is important to recognize the multiple meanings and motivations embedded in the crimes. Foucault demonstrates how proposing a perspective in direct opposition to the original one, generally embodies the

same power relations as the initial idea itself (Foucault, 1977). It is important instead to expose the dynamics of power that have been heretofore hidden as a result of cultural "common sense." Therefore, the proposition is not that if boys merely have the same emotional options as girls, these shootings would not take place. Rather, an analysis of gender, economics, society, the small communities in which shootings took place, the larger culture, as well as interactions among multiple social institutions should yield new insights for a dynamic cultural transformation, not just a reversal of currently accepted codes. These eight highlighted school shootings are also the most horrific in fatalities and injuries, and therefore can be seen as magnifications of this type of crime, making the social intricacies that much more visible.

Cultural and media analysis is a vital methodological tool because so much gender socialization takes place in relationship with the mass media. Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno raised questions about the ways culture may be affected by political and economic processes such that new familial dynamics like "authoritarianism" influenced by these forces start to appear "natural." For instance, as the technological culture develops, the father may lose the centralized position in the family for transmitting skills, experience, and social mores. Instead, "the child's superego is formed in school by peer groups, and through the propaganda of the state and mass media" (Ibid. 120). The culture industry--including Hollywood movies, radio, records, photography, popular culture--is reproduced and disseminated throughout the market. Horkheimer and Adorno argue that the impact of these cultural influences regress independent thinking towards fantasy that can be manipulated for commercial and political ends. This is not to say that media has altogether replaced familial influence, or that media itself is uniformly

to blame, but rather that the interaction of multiple social influences, including the family and the media, is that much more complex and significant, and the influences of multiple social institutions are crucial for understanding problems today.

Walter Benjamin contributed another angle to this perspective, namely that popular culture can serve as a site of resistance by subcultures that define themselves against their material and social conditions. Indeed, the boys who massacred their parents, teachers, principals, and peers, seem to each be a part of a subculture engaged in some form of social resistance. The commodification of resistance in the form of popular icons like Marilyn Manson and Tupac Shakur, and video games like Doom and Quake, can then be seen as modes of production capitalizing on a specific form of young social alienation, as well as, or in lieu of, the more instigating role of which the media is often accused.

To adequately examine the production of masculinity resulting in recent massacres, it is also necessary to explore how the media re-presented the boys who killed. For instance, critics wrote indignantly that the “white, rich” boys were referred to as “diminutive” and “average-looking” while children of color accused of similar crimes are referred to routinely as “animals” (Dowdy, 1991, E1). These are clearly unfair stereotypes for both peoples, but the references to the boys’ small stature could actually be seen as a contributing factor to the crimes rather than merely a description, since the suburban boys who killed seemed to be motivated to violence specifically to destroy these particular perceptions..

Fictional films and books of school homicides may also illuminate popular perceptions and attitudes towards such crimes. Regarding the historical precursor Leopold

and Loeb case (Chicago 1924), Meyer Levin's documentary novel, *Compulsion*, underscored the possibility that these teenage boys killed 14-year-old Bobby Franks, as a reaction to the hostility they endured as Jews and as homosexual lovers. Hal Higden implied in his non-fiction account that Levin had more insight into the crimes than Higden was capable of articulating in his own text. The re-enactment film *Swoon* exaggerated these homophobic and anti-Semitic issues to such an extent that it might have undermined the psychological complexities revealed in other texts. In this work, Leopold and Loeb's friends dressed in drag and came to the courtroom to support the boys who killed, an extremely unlikely scene in 1924. Thus, the viewer is falsely persuaded to believe that a gay identity was entirely acceptable at this time, and consequently less, rather than more relevant to the crime (*Swoon*, 1992). If the boys accepted their own homosexual tendencies, why would they need to kill to prove the reverse? The role of media in both fictional and documentary forms is thus significant in how it influences popular reactions, criminal motivations, as well as perceptions related to the so-called facts of the crimes.

In addition to media re-presentation, specific forms of missing re-presentation are also crucial to adequately examine this phenomenon. Due to the popularity of the "media violence causing real violence" theory, films and television programs related to school shootings were quickly pulled following the real horrific events. Fear of copy-cat reprisals motivated the lack of fictional representation, consequently adding weight to the "violence in the media" argument.

Finally, many of the other popular explanations of these crimes are based on the relative emphasis projected by the media, rather than the common characteristics among the cases. Divorce and working parents are commonly cited causes, and yet many of the

boys had intact nuclear families with at least one stay-at-home parent (See Appendix).

Each boy displayed violent tendencies, made direct threats, and targeted the specific people they said had tormented them. Yet people closest to these boys as well as respected social theorists, continue to insist that there were no warning signs and that there is still “no explanation.” By making the consistent characteristics among these crimes clearer, a more revealing examination of this phenomenon can take place. Then the gender and economic themes become increasingly observable, and its absence in media reports becomes that much more astounding. Unless these issues are recognized and addressed, the violence they sometimes incur will continue to be misunderstood.

A Note on Language

Language is inherently problematic. Words themselves come from a cultural context, and tend to represent the underlying values of a given social and economic system. “Modernists” often accuse post-modern theorists of making up words unnecessarily, obfuscating meaning, rather than clarifying it. Many such words are necessary, however, in that they pose new challenges to the ideological underpinning of a more mainstream language. For instance, in modern usage, the word, “represent” means: 1. To stand for or symbolize. 2. To depict; portray. Post-modern theorists often use the word “re-present” to convey that a given symbol or depiction is not entirely independent of that which is being portrayed nor is it independent of ideology. Instead, the very act of symbolizing affects its interpretation, and this portrayal may convey the assumptions that the given theorist may be trying to challenge. In this same spirit, certain words used in this project are being challenged for embodying a similarly one-dimensional message.

Masculinity or manhood in mainstream language is defined as “the qualities of being an adult male such as courage and vigor” (*Seiko American Heritage Dictionary*). The implication is that such characteristics are innate to males in general. This project seeks to challenge this very concept. If qualities that are historically perceived as feminine can be embraced in the social definition of manhood, these boys described often as “slight” and “nerdy” may not have used violence to prove that they actually have a more courageous and vigorous masculinity. They might have accepted that being male includes a wide continuum of what has been called both feminine and masculine behaviors. Thus, this project seeks to interrogate these very terms. Therefore it would be appropriate to put in quotes words like “masculine” and “feminine.” This would help highlight the idea that the most conventional meanings are only one way of understanding the words, and not necessarily those intended by the author. Similarly words like “normal” can mean many things, and this is also a concept that is examined for its insidious ideological underpinnings. Finally, all the boys blamed “preps and jocks” for their mistreatment. These terms meant something specific to the boys who killed, but using that term conveys a form of objectification that is also critiqued in this project. Therefore, due to the myriad words of this nature, and for the sake of a clearer and more readable text, quotes only appear when I am particularly concerned about confusion regarding more conventional meanings, distinct from my own. Quotes will not appear all of the time around each of these words, but the multiple meanings inherent in them should continue to be interpolated.

CHAPTER II:

LITERATURE REVIEW: POPULAR MEDIA EXPLANATIONS

Part I: Five Popular Explanations:

The literature regarding school shootings has generally emphasized the five popular causes previously mentioned: *gun control laws, violence in the media, evil character, bad parents, and chance*. Recently there have also been some journalistic articles, (including the article Lynn Chancer and I wrote for *Smoke and Mirrors: the hidden context of violence in schools and society*, 2000) reviewed here that try to document the role of masculinity in these shootings. However, the specific patterns of masculinity visible in these crimes and delineated in this thesis has not been articulated and addressed thus far by other scholars or media representatives: the reactions to homophobic insults and the violence towards girls who rejected them.

A cultural hegemony that condones and encourages hyper-masculinity expectations conceals these patterns through a “boys will be boys” ideology, a toleration of “masculine violence,” and an acceptance of misogynist and homophobic attitudes and acts. Given this day-to-day normalization, one might almost expect to find gender all but omitted from public discourse, despite its ongoing relevance. Then the focus on alternative single-issues help deflect attention further from the underlying issues of masculinity and its economic support structures endemic to understanding these cases.

The cultural messages this work seeks to expose are still so hidden that even as the same themes reappeared in the eighth deadly school shooting in Santee, California, (March 2001) the same questions continued to re-emerge in the media: While violence is historically visible in multi-cultural urban schools, why are images of white, suburban

students engaged in school rampages, the most prevalent re-presentations in the media now? That school shootings take place in middle and upper class neighborhoods is portrayed repeatedly as new and perplexing. In truth, however, violence and abuse among the wealthy has always been prevalent, albeit manifestly different from what is seen in inner-urban communities. Rituals like fraternity hazing, what's referred to as "normal adolescent bullying," and fights on football fields long existed in such neighborhoods. For instance, *The New York Times* reports that over 80 deaths occurred in the last 20 years as a result of fraternity initiations (McFadden, "Eight Wrestlers at High School Are Accused in Hazing," 2000). Nonetheless, mainstream media tends to report that each one of these school shootings is unfathomable for the particular white, wealthy neighborhood in which it occurs. "Why do *these* kids kill?" is an increasingly frequent refrain and emphasis in newspaper headlines.

This research suggests that the wrong questions are being posed. Framing the dilemma differently elucidates insights that could move this discourse towards a more effective investigation. The questions addressed here include: Has violence actually increased in white, wealthy suburban communities? If violence has not significantly increased, has it taken a new form? If the violence has indeed increased, what has changed culturally and socially that might be contributing to this phenomenon? The central question becomes: to the extent that violence has either increased or changed character in these schools, what social forces interacted such that massacres have manifested as a new form of school violence, and what is different about this historical moment that they should be happening now?

Explorations of “why now?” and “why this face of violence?” should be paramount. Indeed, research shows that the incidence of violence has not increased in these or other communities, but that its visible shape has taken a new form. Furthermore *The Reason Public Policy Institute* in Los Angeles reports that violence is evenly distributed among urban, rural, and suburban schools (Bragg, “Five Are Killed At School: Boys 11 And 13 Are Held,” 1999). The FBI reports that violence in schools has actually been decreasing over the last seven years (Schraldi, 1998).

Even if it is true that violence is decreasing in schools, the high level of violence still prevalent in schools and in the United States generally, is indicative of the cultural stresses this thesis seeks to expose. Every half hour a child is killed or wounded by a bullet. Every six hours a child between ten and nineteen years old commits suicide with a handgun. For school-age youth, the chances of being a victim of a violent crime are greater than being hurt in a car accident. And again, murder is the second leading cause of death nationally for all youth under age twenty-five (Spina, 2000, 1). The U.S. Department of Justice reports that homicide is the only major cause of childhood deaths that that has increased over the past three decades (Finkelhor and Omrod, 2001-2002). Thus in spite of decreased violence reported by the FBI, the current incidence of violence is alarming. Violence takes place in all types of neighborhoods, but school shootings have become the most horrific manifestation of this violence, and perhaps the most magnified expression of the rage and alienation many youth are currently experiencing. Since 1992, there was at least one multiple victim school homicide annually. Since then school shootings have annually increased in frequency and/or number of casualties.

It is significant that these shootings have taken place in suburban generally wealthy communities. As suburban “safe havens” begin to manifest the same problems “white flight” tried to escape, The American Dream mythology is challenged. The boys who killed are children who appear to have all the opportunities America offers. They come, for the most part, from wealthy, bourgeois families whose very presence in the suburbs represents a watershed of American success. These shootings are roiling the country because they break the barrier between “us and them,” suburbs/cities, white/black, rich/poor, good/evil. Problems relating to violence, alienation, discontent, and rage may be just as prevalent in suburbs, as depicted in films by David Lynch, as they are in cities. The idea that financial success breeds happiness and respite from the problems seen in “cultures of poverty” is no longer so evident.

The role of masculinity and hyper-capitalist forces that construct and maintain unattainable gender expectations are implicated. The boys who killed said they were seeking revenge on “preps and jocks”—students who represented the American boy ideal of athletic prowess, and masculine domination. These entrenched values and cultural practices need re-examining. Other developed countries do not seem to nurture the same kinds of aggressive and competitive daily dynamics and social institutions.

Pressure for men to be violent, dominant, aggressive, and hostile is not new, although the tendency seems to be increasing. Rather the exclusive focus on violence in inner cities as opposed to suburbs has helped to conceal widespread discord in culture generally. Violence in black communities, for instance, is considered routine in the media. News of homicides, assaults, or other violent incidents is treated as common day experiences, whereas violence in white communities is heralded as new, different, and

shocking. The different depictions had become prescriptions, until the violence in suburbs became so horrific; now inner city spokespeople often announce that nothing like that could ever happen “here”. In fact, W. Rodney Hammond, a psychologist who heads violence prevention efforts for the Center for Disease Control and Prevention in Atlanta says youth homicides in major urban areas have dropped in recent years, while rates in rural and suburban areas are constant or rising (Sleek, 1999). “Inner cities have actually learned better how to prevent violence at schools, if only out of fear reports *Time Magazine* (Cloud, “Just A Routine School Shooting,” 1999).

Donna Gaines documents in *Teenage Wasteland* that the emptiness of the suburbs can cause greater alienation and rage (Gaines, 2000). The communities tend to be isolated and young people have few other social outlets other than school. Egan from the *New York Times* writes about suburban schools: “In these schools, being the brunt of public slight or excluded by the dominant social groups take on added importance because the schools are so central to the children’s lives, according to experts. The basic issues in these middle class schools is competition—who has the biggest car, who is the best athlete, who is in the right group—and students are under intense pressure, unlike the urban school where often the basic issue is just survival” (Egan, “Santee Is Latest Blow to Myth of Suburbia’s Safer Schools,” 2001).

In contrast, one of my students, Ted Rourke, interviewed for *New York Magazine* argued that in the city there is more to engage young people.

“It’s like in New York City there’s so much to do. You get to walk down the streets, you see all kinds of people, there’s variety everywhere. In Colorado, there’s nothing going on—those kids just download a bunch of stuff from the Internet and watch TV. There’s nothing to look at but houses and grass and trees—”(Jo Sales, 1999).

As *New York* magazine interviewed other students from New York City, their perception of the different types of violence seen in the cities and suburbs were poignant.

They all insisted a school massacre was unlikely to take place in their city.

Ted Rourke: We don't have a 300-acre football field."

Uwavié Ibanez: Those things just seem to add to the boundaries between people. Like who gets to play on that football field? Like when they have jocks who think they have to beat up on the nerds... They've become like gangs, basically."

Sylvia DeJesus (another one of my students): Oh, we have gangs. Like the Bloods and the Crips and the Latin Kings. But they just fight amongst themselves (Jo Sales, 1999).

Thus, similar violence takes place in both suburbs and urban areas, but the form tends to be different. Exposing the roots of the gruesome school-shooting phenomenon may yield insights then for understanding the high rate of violence writ large.

The first step is to recognize how popular explanations serve to conceal underlying issues. Each explication has valid contributions towards understanding school shootings, but the process of blaming one or the other exclusively, may avert more complex analysis. As potential scapegoats, these explanations ignore the concerns articulated by the boys who killed, and instead fault specific social institutions, rather than looking more deeply at the cultural matrix itself.

Gun Control Debates

Contradictory Research

One of the most common issues blamed for school shootings are gun control laws. This section critiques the implications of gun control arguments, and raises the concern that while lax gun control laws probably do increase the rate of fatal violence in the United

States, and the recent outbreak of school shootings specifically, this phenomenon can't be entirely reduced to the level of policy. Policy may have some influence on social culture, but it is only one factor among myriad influences in need of examination.

Research concerning gun control and school shootings is vast and contradictory. Tighter gun control laws seem to be at least part of what's necessary to reduce deaths by firearms. If children had no access to guns they wouldn't be able to use them and kill so many people at one time. The problem is magnified in the South where guns are a significant aspect of the cultural norms; it is not unusual for families to own rifles or even machine guns. The school shootings in these rural and suburban areas were by and large committed by heavy artillery, whereas in New York City the guns used in violent crime are more often of the Saturday Night Special variety, deadly and horrific, but not capable of the same damage as the larger and more sophisticated machinery in the suburban and rural areas. (Saturday Night Specials were made illegal after one was used in the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr. in 1968). Guns are less accessible in urban areas where hunting is not a past time. While accessibility and gun control laws are critical, the wider cultural acceptance of more powerful weapons in these rural and suburban areas is also an issue.

Countries with strict gun control laws such as Britain, Germany, and Japan do have the lowest homicide rates in the world. (Carleson, "Consensus Remains Elusive in Nation's Gun-Violence Debate," 1999). The Center for Disease Control (1997) found that firearm deaths among American children age 14 or under are 12 times higher than among children in the other 25 industrialized countries combined (Ibid.). As startling as these statistics seem-- there is no clear indication that it is gun control laws per se that are most instrumental in protecting children from violence. It may well be numerous other factors

including different cultural norms, dynamics, and expectations. Nor is school violence unheard of in these countries--recently a school shooting took place in Erfurt, Germany (April 26, 2002). A boy, dressed in black much like many of the boys who killed in the United States, opened fire in his school and killed 18 people: 14 faculty, a policeman, 2 students, and himself. There are very strict gun control laws in Germany and still this shooting took place.

While stricter gun control laws should at least make it more difficult to access guns, my argument is that it is the relationship between guns and masculinity that compounds the problem. Guns are considered powerful, masculine signifiers, and these attributes were craved by many of the boys who killed. Accessible guns in the United States are a symptom of this greater cultural issue-- linking masculinity to violence--rather than the entire cause itself. Arguments concerning whether gun control should be stricter or more lax are waged ferociously in policy debates. These debates are outlined and analyzed below, but, in the end, I believe this discussion becomes at least in part a decoy for the more pervasive social issues addressed in this thesis.

Just as there are studies that show strict gun control laws correlate with less violence, there are comparable studies concluding less rather than more gun control would help stem the tide of school shootings. For instance, Switzerland, through its militia system, distributes both pistols and fully automatic assault rifles to all adults, and requires them to store their weapons at home. Civilian long-gun purchases are essentially unregulated, and handguns are available to any adult without a criminal record or mental defect. Even so, Switzerland suffers far less crime per capita than the United States and almost no gun crime (Kopel, 1988).

Some of the kids who killed were permitted to use guns as children –ie.

Kipland Kinkel, Oregon 1998-- and others were forbidden from using guns, and even prevented from playing with toy guns–ie. Dylan Klebold, Colorado 1999, and Mitchell Johnson, Arkansas 1998 –(Belluck and Wilgoren, 1999 and Connor, 1998). The boys' relationship to guns as children does not appear to be a consistent factor in explaining the cause of these massacres.

Did the boys who killed get their guns legally or illegally? This information could be helpful in determining the role of gun laws in school shootings. The *Violence Policy Center* issued an eighty-three-page report analyzing the firearms used in high-profile shootings between 1963 and 2001 (VPC, 2001). A list of the guns used in the eight cases profiled in this project and the method of acquisition is charted in the appendix.

From this litany of gun acquisitions by the boys who killed, it is immediately apparent that almost all the guns were legally acquired by the original owner, and then generally stolen from adults by the boys who killed. These youth gained access to gun cabinets whether they were locked or unlocked. The first implication of this analysis is that making it more difficult for adults to acquire guns would help reduce child possession. Many of the boys who killed were taught how to shoot and how to remove any safety locks by their fathers. For this reason it seems that gun control laws restricting accessibility would contribute to stemming the tide of school shootings. Even if making guns less accessible helps to some extent though, the rage and unhappiness these boys experienced remains the underlying problem that must be addressed for change to occur. Decreasing guns may decrease the death toll, but would not necessarily decrease the level of potentially lethal hostility and aggression expressed by boys across the nation.

Opponents to gun control generally believe that the right to possess firearms has actually helped prevent school shootings from wreaking greater havoc. In Mississippi (1997), Assistant Principal Mryck, used his own handgun to detain Woodham and kept him from shooting other students. A nearby citizen with a gun restrained another student-shooter in Pennsylvania (1998) for 11 minutes before the police arrived (Darbe, "Boston Media Deceived by 'Stop Handgun Violence' Lobby," 2001).

John Lott Jr., a University of Chicago professor, says the 1995 gun control laws that prohibit the possession of a gun within 1000 feet of a school actually increases rather than decreases the incidence of violence. The law-abiding citizens respect laws, he says, but, "the bad people, don't obey these laws" (Darbe, 2001). In Mississippi (1997) the Assistant Principal ran the 1000 feet to retrieve his gun at which point the student had already shot nine students. In Arkansas (1998), Paul Jannuzzo, Vice President and general counsel of gun-maker Glock, pointed-out that Johnson and Golden committed a break and entry in two different places, stole a car, took a firearm within 1000 feet of the school, and pulled a fire alarm. That's five felonies, he said. "What's another law going to do" (Kinney, 1998)? In Arkansas (1998), Pennsylvania (1998), and California (2001) the boys reportedly stole locked-up weapons from relatives. In Colorado (1999) the two shooters used sawed-off shotguns, a pistol, and an assault-type rifle, as well as more than 30 bombs. These weapons were restricted under existing gun control laws in Colorado, and yet they did not detain the killers (Ibid.).

Consequently, the gun lobby lead by the NRA, advocates less, not more gun control laws, and instead, stricter enforcement of existing policies. Since many of these boys broke into locked cabinets to acquire their weapons, and since some of the weapons

were illegal, the lobby argues that existing gun laws are not enforced, and therefore new laws will have no improved effect. A 1983 National Institute of Justice study found that only one percent of privately owned firearms are involved in criminal activity. The conclusion was that eliminating 99 percent of the nation's guns would not ameliorate crime (Kaminer, 1996).

Some argue that access to guns does dramatically increase the capacity to kill, and indeed it has multiplied the casualty rate. Ronald Stephens, the executive director of the National School Safety Center said: "In the old days kids would walk away from a fight with a few bruises. Now it's a body count"(Monmaney and Krikorkian, 1999). Advocates of tighter gun control also argue that decreased availability of guns would raise gun prices and necessarily reduce accessibility. Even if crime did not substantively decrease, the lethal nature of assaults would decrease (Kaminer, 1996). Research tends to show that decreased use of guns leads to an increase in nonfatal injuries (Spitzer, 1995 and Spina, 2000).

In the wake of Littleton, Colorado , however, even the NRA made marginal efforts to capitulate to gun control demands. Nonetheless, they continue to oppose increasing the age of legal acquisition from 18 to 21, and they object to removing the loopholes in current policies that make it easier to acquire guns. The NRA rejects restrictions that would enforce background checks on people trying to buy weapons at gun shows, while accepting the background checks from gun stores. Regarding the background checks a gun dealer initiates, the NRA supports laws allowing adults to give the gun to any other individual, even a minor, without any checks at all. For this and other reasons, gun control advocates complain that it is easier to buy a gun than to get a

driver's license and that an ability to handle a gun safely and responsibly should be a provision for gun ownership (Anderson, 1999).

These loopholes were instrumental in Harris and Klebold's gun acquisitions in Colorado (1999). Klebold's friend, Robyn Anderson, bought two shotguns and a rifle at a gun show in Denver where background checks are not mandated. (Although even at 18 years old Anderson might have passed these checks at a dealership). She then gave them legally to Klebold and Harris. Both were seventeen at the time and both had recent police records, but according to current gun laws, nothing illegal transpired.

Arguing that such loopholes are part of the problem, some parents of the homicide victims became activists against gun accessibility, and campaigned heavily for political candidates that prioritized gun control. Believing it was relaxed gun-control laws that were responsible for the death of her daughter in Arkansas (1998), one mother campaigned for Chuck Schumer against Al D'Amato in the 1998 New York State Senate campaign. "What Al D'Amato doesn't seem to understand is that guns are killing our children...we need a Congress that cares about families like mine," she said (Dao, 1998). In the end empirical research is still inconclusive. There is no overriding evidence that guns deter criminal violence or that gun control laws reduce crime (Kaminer, 1996).

The history of gun control legislation has become a popular media topic as guns are increasingly implicated in school shootings. Consequently interpreting the Second Amendment has become a pivotal issue in efforts to address the recent massacres. According to Robert Spitzer in *The Politics of Gun Control* (1995), prevailing Supreme Court opinions find that the Second Amendment guarantees a right to bear arms *only in a government formed militia*, not for private vigilantism. He cites Supreme Court decisions

Presser v. Illinois 1886, *Miller v. Texas* 1894, *Robertson v. Baldwin* 1897, *Adams v. Williams* 1973, and *Lewis v. U.S.* 1980 to bolster this view (Spitzer, 1995 and Kaminer, 1996). The gun lobby argues that there are other viable interpretations of these cases. For instance they argue that while *Presser v. Illinois* maintained that the Second Amendment does not provide gun ownership rights to private citizens, the case also made clear that the Constitutional Amendments applies only to the federal government, and not to the states. This is an idea now politically discredited but still used by pro-gun lobbyists. *U.S. v. Miller* (1939) held that two men convicted of transporting an unregistered shotgun across state lines were not protected under the Second Amendment without evidence that the shotgun was in fact a militia weapon. This ruling then implied to the gun lobby that the Second Amendment protects the right to bear arms that in fact *are suitable for a militia*. Gun control advocates, on the other hand, cite this ruling as a right to bear arms only when performing service in the militia (Kaminer, 1996). There are strict rules concerning what types of weapons can be used in a contemporary militia. Ironically, there are many weapons legal for use in daily life, which are prohibited in war (Nelson, 1999). In Arkansas (1998) minors cannot legally possess handguns but they can own shotguns and rifles (Editorial's Writer Desk, *Los Angeles Times*, 1998).

Constitutional amendments were meant originally to guarantee people rights against abuses by the State. Does the Second Amendment prevent the government from infringing on the rights of the people to organize a militia against an abusive government or does the Second Amendment prevent the government from infringing on the rights of the people to own individual guns for use in hunting or self-defense? This question

continues to divide gun control advocates from the gun lobby; in the current political climate, increased gun control seems unlikely regardless of contemporary interpretations.

Resisting Despotic Government

The Second Amendment is debated on two central fronts: whether the right to own a gun is guaranteed at all, and if it is guaranteed what are the conditions under which a gun is legally possessed. The previous section addressed whether a private citizen has the right to own a gun. This section engages the spirit of the debate regarding the conditions under which guns are permissible, and the impact of different interpretations on the school shootings.

The Second Amendment states: “A well-regulated Militia, being necessary to the security of a free State, the right of the people to keep and bear Arms, shall not be infringed.” Most people agree that U.S. citizens are guaranteed the right to resist a centralized government should it devolve into dictatorship. The Declaration of Independence grants that people have a right to rise up against a despotic government: “that, whenever any form of government becomes destructive of these ends-- life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness-- it is the right of the people to abolish it...”

Whether the Amendment guarantees a right to own a gun in the interests of self-defense against crime rather than as a communal defense against tyranny is debated (Kaminer, 1996). The purpose of city and state police departments is to protect U.S. citizens, making vigilantism illegal and generally criminal. The right to engage in personal retribution is exchanged for wider protections in a civil society. John Locke wrote: “God hath certainly appointed Government to restrain the partiality and violence

of Men...My life not being in danger, I may have the benefit of appealing to the Law..." (Locke, 1998). Locke does specify, however, "my life not being in danger," as a necessary condition for prohibiting vigilantism. There is no Amendment to the Constitution that clearly guarantees the right to kill to protect one's life, but Robert Spitzer (1995) argues that this right is protected under Common Law.

The distinction between a right to self-defense, and a right to protect against despotic governing institutions, highlights concerns about the current justice system. Some people believe that crime in the U.S. is not avenged appropriately, and adequate reparations to victims are not duly made. Furthermore gun advocates argue that the government can't possibly protect citizens from all potential situations, and it is these gaps that make it necessary for private citizens to own guns.

Many have argued that the disorder that followed the acquittal of the police officers that assaulted Rodney King in 1992 was the effect of an uprising rather than a riot (Herman, 1997), and therefore protected by the Second Amendment. Videos were played internationally showing police brutally beating King with their batons. The *uprising* was said to be a reaction to "the failure of the justice system to hold armed white police officers accountable for the severe beating of an unarmed black man" (Herman, 1997, 243). Within the African-American community and beyond, people understood this incident as systemic whereby police themselves criminally assault innocent victims. The mostly white jury sided with the police in this case, which was perceived as loyalty to a racist police force, and a betrayal of their fellow citizens. King was then assaulted twice, first by the police who beat him, and then by a jury of his peers who acquitted his assailants. Lack of police accountability after the New York City tragedies involving

police abuse, as in the cases of Abner Louima and Amadou Diallo, also revealed potentially criminal behavior among the police, and further cast doubt on the ability of government to adequately protect all its citizens.

This growing distrust was depicted in the 2001 HBO-hit series, *The Sopranos*, when the mafia leader's therapist, Dr. Melphi, is raped in her suburban community. The perpetrator is caught and identified, and then let free due to a technicality in the law. For the first time, the model citizen, Melphi, briefly considers the mafia as a legitimate intervention force where state police failed to protect her. Her ex-husband and son also express their wish to personally seek retribution in lieu of adequate legal corrections.

By the same logic, albeit of a different degree and nature, it could be argued that the students who shot the bullies in their school were expressing similar frustrations about not being protected by their communities. Many of the boys who killed blamed their parents, teachers, and other adults for not trying to stop the abusive remarks and actions directed at them. Harris (Colorado 1999) left a note in his room stating that he acted partly because the adults in his life did not protect him:

If you are reading this, my mission is complete...Your children who have ridiculed me, who have chosen not to accept me, who have treated me like I am not worth their time are dead...I may have taken their lives and my own---but it was your doing. Teachers, parents, LET THIS MASSACRE BE ON YOUR SHOULDERS UNTIL THE DAY YOU DIE (emphasis in original; MSNBC Staff and Wire Reports, 1999).

Harris' words echoed the manifesto articulated by Ramsey (Washington 1996)

I figured since the principal and the dean weren't doing anything that was making any impression, that I was gonna have to do something, or else I was gonna keep on getting picked on" (Dedman, 2000).

When asked “Why the School?” Ramsey replied: “That’s where most of my pain and suffering was” (Ibid.).

Recall again Woodham (Mississippi 1997) who blamed “society” for allowing the abuse to continue. He wrote: “I killed because people like me are mistreated every day. I do this to show society, ‘Push us and we will push back...All throughout my life, I was ridiculed. Always beaten, always hated. Can you, society, truly blame me for what I do?’” (Moehringer, “Tales of Teen Murder Plot Terrify Mississippi Town,” 1997). It was as if these incidents manifest as individual rebellions in a larger war where adults failed to protect them.

The boys raged against their peers who abused them, as well as the adults they believed were complicit by tolerating and/or condoning the daily bullying. Each boy tried to make clear that they expected their rage to be taken seriously. “No, I am not crazy,” insisted Harris in his diary (Barron, 1999), and Woodham also said: “I am not insane, I am angry” (Holland, 1998). They seemed to try to convey that their anger and violent tendencies were *normal* expressions of their legitimate rage. Klebold and Harris (Colorado 1999) might have attempted an even broader statement, expanding their plot to attack the larger society as well. Jefferson County’s Sheriff’s spokesman Steve Davis said: “They wanted to kill 500 people, hijack a plane and take it to New York City” (Sebastian, 1999).

The other boys who killed also made clear that they were reacting to a perceived injustice. Carneal (Kentucky 1997) said he was targeting “popular, preppie” students who he blamed for his mistreatment (Adams, Malone, Hall and Riley,” 1998). Two of the eight boys killed their parents, and four killed school officials. Andrew Wurst, age 14,

(Pennsylvania 1998) also killed a popular male teacher. In three cases (Harris, Colorado 1999; Carneal, Kentucky 1997; and Ramsey, Alaska 1997), the boys who killed conveyed that they did not feel protected by adults in their lives, and that this was a component of their motivation for shooting. In the spirit of the Second Amendment, the boys may have thought they had a legitimate rationale for their massacres: the school had become to them a despotic order ruled by “preps and jocks.”

The boys who killed also seemed to feel proud of their acts. They didn’t seem to think they had done wrong. They referred to their shooting as a final show of strength against their abusive enemies. Carneal (Kentucky 1997) said: “I just wanted the guys to think I was cool” (Blank, “The Kid No One Noticed,” 1998). They fought the individual people who abused them as well as representatives of a system they believed supported this abuse. For instance, three of them targeted religious Christians. This may have some relationship to the recent phenomenon where anti-bully regulations are assailed by some Christian fundamentalist organizations as excuses for pro-gay propaganda. The implication is that students have a right to harass their peers if they appear gay (Morris, 2001). The Church became another institution that might have been perceived as tolerating and/or condoning the gay bashing experienced by the boys who killed.

It is important, then, to look at why these children felt they had a mandate to commit these crimes. In what ways did they feel that the institutions meant to protect them had effectively failed them (become despotic), and that matters had to be taken into their own hands. Looking at gun control laws is illuminating, but ultimately it lures the arguments toward policy, and away from culture. Analyzing the associations between guns and masculinity, and the relationship between the Second Amendment, masculinity,

and interpretations relating to despotic government is crucial. This discussion will contribute more to understanding and preventing school shootings than only focusing on guns themselves which emerge as more of a symptom of these larger issues.

The gun lobby also happens to be one of the greatest contributors to the Republican Party. In addition to the valid merits of their concerns, Democrats had financial and political inducement to blame guns as the central factor contributing to these incidents. Alternately, it was mostly Republicans who condemned *media violence* while Hollywood members tend to financially support Democrats. Therefore in addition to some potentially valid concerns, joining accusations against *violence in the media* became a natural candidate for the mostly Republican gun lobby to rally behind.

Violence in the Media

Contradictory Research

Buttressed by evidence that many of the boys enjoyed violent video games, music, and movies, the NRA joined attacks directed at violent popular culture. Just like gun control, however, *violence in the media* is another single-issue explanation, serving as a potential scapegoat for deeper social problems. Furthermore, there is no conclusive research that media violence causes real violence (Strickland 1975, Larsen 1968, Cline 1974). In fact, American media is displayed all over the world, but it is only in the United States that high levels of real violence are calibrated.

Four national health associations definitively link violence in television, music, video games, and movies to increased aggression in children. These include: The *American Academy of Pediatrics*, *The American Medical Association*, *The American*

Psychological Association, and the *American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry* (The Associated Press, "The Mind of Babes," 2000). Critics of this perspective contend, however, that even if violent images might influence some children to *feel more aggressive*, there is no evidence that violent images actually cause people to *become violent* (Schor, 2000).

The distinction between aggression and violence is important. Eric Fromm helps differentiate these terms by clarifying that aggression is considered a biologically adaptive impulse used by mammals in the service of self-defense. This is different from a proclivity towards domination and cruelty, found only among humans; the former is *not* evil, Fromm writes, the latter is evil (Fromm, 1961). The conflation of these ideas in violence in the media studies undermines their validity.

Jojada Verrips argues that rather than corrupting youth or inspiring criminal behavior, violent media often moralizes about the consequences of *bad* behavior, and the necessity for adhering to social norms. Christian fundamentalists are a large percentage of advocates for media violence censorship, and yet, Verrips argues, most of these films articulate Christian values themselves.

...The films some people want to censor--and even sometimes ban--can best be seen as particular kinds of educational device, which, by using the disproportional, the monstrous, and the mysterious, broadcast moral messages about how one can, and must, deal with aggressive and sexual passions and emotions. On closer examination these much-resented films do not differ much from the fire-and-brimstone sermons with which so many Christians are raised (Verrips, 2001, 200).

Indeed, vampire films tend to communicate the fatal consequence of female promiscuity. Most films depicting sexual relationships portray the woman with "excess sexuality," as the "bad guy" (*Fatal Attraction*, *Basic Instinct*). *Natural Born Killers*, one

of the films accused of motivating the boys who killed, conveyed that physically abusive parents produce mass murderers. This list goes on.

Verrips argues that other than orthodox Christians, it is the conservative bourgeois elite advocating censorship. Since the rise of the working-class in the nineteenth century, this group has criticized the lifestyle and taste of the working class, the main consumers of these films (Ibid. 193). They associate such fare as lower-class amusement in contrast to arts and theatre. The association is then made that engaging in these kinds of activities portends further social disintegration. The films are accused of leading such people toward “socially disturbing, immoral, and even criminal behavior” (Ibid. 193).

The violence, Verrips argues, represents to this group “the possibility of chaos, disturbance and revolution.” Theatre, “the province of the well-educated and largely adult audience,” and real-life violence, depicted in news programs, are not targeted in spite of the excess violence and sexuality depicted there.

Critics who take aim, at film violence, from mainstream politicians like Bob Dole to the rightwing American Family Association, are loathe to criticize the larger context of capitalism’s profit-driven, anything-goes stance and reserve their venom for the Hollywood establishment whose support for a liberal social agenda is anathema to conservatives (Ibid. 195).

Violence in the media may be seen as a threat because it represents an “unbridled expression of primary impulses,” energy that might be garnered towards political and social resistance. In fact the most popular media, considered favorites of the boys who killed, did represent some social opposition that the boys seemed to be trying to communicate. For instance, Marilyn Manson, a popular icon of the boys who killed, sang

a veritable theme song on behalf of those excluded from “prep and jock”-type cliques.

The song articulated a wish to reverse the dynamics of power between them.

The Beautiful People

I don't want you and I don't need you
Don't bother to resist, I'll beat you
It's not your fault that you're always wrong
The weak ones are there to justify the strong

The horrible people, the horrible people
It's as anatomic as the size of your staff
Capitalism has made it their way
Old-fashioned fascism will take it away

The song references fascism as a response to the degradation experienced by people who might admire Manson. Frederick Nietzsche is a popular theorist of Manson's groupies.

The weak ones are there to justify the strong sounds like a poor appropriation of *Beyond Good and Evil*, and an excuse to use sheer will to turn the tables. Manson uses the power of masculinity concerns to attack “the beautiful people” implying that it is their sexuality (size of staff) that is somehow “horrible,” not his—even though he may have other feminine features.

Another Manson song laments a feeling of missing manhood, and works to reverse this injured experience by affiliating with a powerful (masculine) force, the devil:

Snake Eyes and Sissies

Just a boy, just a boy
Just a little fucking boy,
I can never be a man

I ain't no working man
Do the best I can, I got
The devil's hand

The boys who killed may well have seen their own concerns reflected in such media re-presentations. Being abused and called gay might have undermined their sense of themselves as young men. But even if they related to these kinds of media representations, that does not mean that this is what motivated them to commit violence. Fear of political resistance and threats of wanton violence are distinctly different concerns. It is not clear which was perceived as more menacing by proponents of the *violence in the media* theory.

Commercials or media icons, like Manson, are used to seduce children/adults into buying symbols associated with power or respect. Such sales contribute today to what Goffman refers to as the “presentation of the self,” such that internal attributes can be bought as easily as clothes or other external symbols (Goffman, 1959).

Thus *violence in media* accusations can create McCarthy-type witch-hunts on potentially offending culprits, instead of deep reflection on distorted social norms. In the sixties, Frederic Wertham, psychiatrist and author of *Seduction of the Innocent*, led a successful movement against violence in the media. For a time the media capitulated to his demands, and violence re-presentations decreased. There were long codebooks outlining the permissible limits for depicting violence and sexuality. One such code was that *good guys* had to always prevail against the *bad*. Today *The Center for Media and Public Affairs* still assails the fact that now “good guys commit violence almost as often as bad guys in both television and movies” (MacNeil-Lehrer Productions, 1999). One of the disturbing implications of this code is that violence is advocated as long as it is in the service of good. This perspective, in itself, may have been part of the rationale of many of the school shooters: to seek, what they perceived as, legitimate, “good” revenge on

their schools. They declared enthusiastic pride after their shootings for their “heroic” acts, believing they were righteously avenging the wrongs they felt they had endured (See Appendix). It is interesting that even while violence in the media was most restricted, this belief-system was freely conveyed as a composite of “appropriate media genre.”

Censorship of this kind was successful based on research that violence in the media causes aggression. There is, again, no existing research that shows that media representations actually cause violence. In fact it is also argued that since FBI statistics show that violence has dropped in America for a record seven years in a row, even as the violence in video games has become increasingly more realistic, there seems to be no direct correlation between real violence and playing violent video games. (About.com, “Video Game Violence,” 2000 and Murphy, “Is Violent Entertainment to Blame for Recent School Shootings?” 2000). Of course even if such a correlation were founded, this would still not prove a causal relationship.

Popular responses to these accusations, however, seem to reflect an unfortunate acceptance of these single-issue explanations. In the same way as the Arkansas (1998) parent lobbied Congress for stricter gun control laws after that massacre (Dob, 1999), the parent of one of the victims in Kentucky (1997), Sabrina Steger, spoke out to Congress, urging them to ban the sales of mature video games to minors and to finance a campaign to make parents more aware of video game content (About.com, “Video Game Violence, 2000).

These discussions are also problematic due to different perceptions of violence. As Judge Stewart famously gave up on defining pornography by declaring, “I know it when I see it,” the specific notion of violence changes with an individual belief system.

Is each theory referring to violence that is physical or does it also include less visible forms of violence like harassment, passive-aggression, or sublimated violence? It is not always clear from each study how violence is defined. Ellen Willis writes that in legal attacks, defining pornography often boils down to those in power saying, "What you like is pornography, what I like is erotica" (Willis, 1983). Similarly controversies over defining violence become, "What you do is violence, what I do is self-defense or hunting." Such divergent perspectives make it difficult to measure the increase or decrease of violence, let alone the variables that may be influential.

Many of the boys who killed did play violent video games like Doom or Quake. These tend to be virtual war games in which the player is encouraged to gun down life-like looking people. That the shootings often mimicked such video game scenes added fuel to the argument that they serve as a motivating factor. Lt. Col. David Grossman believes video games definitively teach violence. Grossman is a former Army psychologist who specialized in training soldiers for combat. He says, video games like Doom, teach children, "the skill and the will to kill." He believes we need to restrict children's access to video games in the same way we try to regulate guns...tobacco, alcohol, or sex." The Marines actually deny that they use games like Doom to desensitize recruits. They do admit to using Doom to teach teamwork and eye and hand coordination (Stossel, "The Games Kids Play," 2000).

In the fifties and sixties, Wertham became so influential in his opposition to media violence that there were Congressional hearings forcing media to answer questions concerning the violent content of their work. Wertham even blamed Vietnam representations on TV for hardening citizens to war, rather than the war itself that many

were protesting because of the real violence wreaking havoc on families (Wertham, 1968). This argument seems to ignore the effect of actual violence, faulting instead media reflections; it assumes a simple behaviorist approach, as if people are only “blank slates” without critical or resistant capacities.

Each of the boys who killed did seem to be obsessed with a specific violent media. Some of the shootings seemed indeed to resemble scenes in these media representations. Even if media violence provided the theatrics of the violence, though, and guns provided the weapons, the underlying issues are still disguised. What produced such lethal rage at perceived injustices in the first place? It is likely that the boys’ anger was mounting before seeing media violence, and possible that they were drawn to these depictions as a result of their initial frustrations and alienation that have been dangerously overlooked.

The link this thesis seeks to expose is the relentless association between masculinity and violence in contemporary institutions of which the media is only one of many perpetrators. This perspective allows for media influence without disregarding the boys’ own explanations for their crimes.

Harris and Klebold (Colorado 1999) watched *Natural Born Killers* repeatedly. They made videotapes of themselves shooting high-powered guns that mimicked the scenes in this film. Barry Loukatais (Washington 1996) was also fascinated with *Natural Born Killers*. Many of the boys who killed (Alaska 1997, Kentucky 1997, Arkansas 1998, Oregon 1998, and Colorado 1999) were drawn to violent video games like *Doom*, *Quake*, and *Mortal Kombat*. Marilyn Manson and the teenage Gothic subculture were strong interests of five of the boys who killed. Three others liked Tupac Shakur (Belluck,

1998; Fainaru, 1998; Adams and Malone, 1998; Egan, "From Shooting Up Schools;" Bernstein, 1998, Wilgoren, "Society of Outcasts," Firestone, "Guns and Schools").

Nevertheless, the boys who killed made a point of stating that they were not motivated by the media they watched. Harris left this note in his room:

*SURELY YOU WILL TRY TO BLAME IT ON THE CLOTHES I WEAR,
THE MUSIC I LISTEN TO, OR THE WAY I CHOOSE TO PRESENT
MYSELF - BUT NO. DO NOT HIDE BEHIND MY CHOICES* (Capitals
and italics in original. Harris, 1999).

Carneal (Kentucky 1997) also said: "I don't know why I did it, but I know it wasn't a movie" (Blank, "The Kid No One Noticed," 1998). Woodham (Mississippi 1997) said sardonically that he knew he would be blamed for what he did if only to titillate consumer society and to provide tales for the amusement of unconcerned adults. "The ratings wouldn't be high enough if you didn't, and it wouldn't make good gossip for all the old ladies," he wrote (Moehringer, "Tales of Teen Murder Plot Terrify Mississippi Town," 1997). The boys who killed seemed to have a pre-emptive defense against charges that the media "made them do it," and they made many specific arguments to dispel that belief, and even implicated the corporate aspects of media rather than the violence depicted.

Marilyn Manson, admired by many of the boys who killed, became an alternative commodity, but one that seemed to speak to some of the boys' concerns. His persona seemed to be created in part to critique popular media as well. His name came from a compilation of Marilyn Monroe and Charles Manson. In fact each of the members in the band are named for a high-profile media woman who came to represent femininity in American culture and a serial murder:

Twiggy Ramirez: Twiggy (Sixties model) and Richard Ramirez (serial killer)

Ginger Fish: Ginger Rogers (of Fred Astaire) and Albert Fish (cannibal child-killer)

Madonna Wayne Gacy: Madonna and John Wayne Gacy (serial killer)

Former member: Sara Lee Lucas: Sara Lee (baking goods) and Henry Lee Lucas (killer)

Manson is extremely skinny and is covered with tattoos, wears red lipstick, red painted nails, bleached blond hair, black mascara, laced stockings, and dresses (as do his other band members). He also poses for photos with his legs crossed in feminine gestures, covering his chest as if to conceal breasts, and trying to make his crotch look like a vagina, instead of a penis. By appropriating high-profile names representing hyper-femininity, and linking them with names of male serial killers, Manson magnifies hostility towards women, even as he revels in it. Then screaming powerful songs of resistance and rage, as well as flaunting tattoos, representing “masculine” strength, the charge that he might be “too feminine” is turned on its head. Manson becomes the hyper-feminine insisting on being perceived as masculine, nonetheless. This could be alluring for the boys who killed. Judith Butler writes:

Even the most noxious terms could be owned, that the most injurious interpellations could also be the site of radical reoccupation and resignification...I am led to embrace the terms that injure me because they constitute me socially... As a further paradox, then only by occupying--being occupied by that injurious term can I resist and oppose it, recasting the power that constitutes me as the power I oppose...(Butler, 1997, 104).

The boys who killed and followed Manson may have used him to help them reverse the injuries they otherwise endured, reversing the meanings, and re-constructing their identities. Blaming Manson for the school shootings becomes a very specific

scapegoat, deflecting attention away from the resistance Manson potentially represents, and the boys who killed articulated as their motivation.

Politically, these concerns also manifest on the level of policy—a forum unable to capture the complexities in these cases. After Colorado (1999) President Clinton asked Hollywood to decrease the level of violence in their films. The boys who killed stated clearly why they acted, and just as clearly that it was not because of media violence; the popular outcry ignored their own explanations in favor of those the boys' insisted were *not* the issue. In this way censorship of media violence became another action muffling the boys' own concerns; effectively creating another clue to the violence they perpetuated.

Some news media became so sensitive to accusations that news media violence causes copycat shootings that they began to bury the news. For instance, *The Chicago Sun-Times* swept the Littleton massacre entirely off its front page and on to page two, even on the first day (Jurkowitz, 1998).

One popular complaint against the media, however, is not that they report the news; it is about *how* they report the news. For instance context is important, but rarely mentioned. Thirty-nine people have been killed in high-profile school shootings since 1996, but five thousand teenagers are gunned down in America every year (*San Francisco Chronicle*, 2001). "It's a certain kind of visible violence, said Princeton History Professor David Freund (Bloom, 2001). "You don't have these kinds of questions when people in minority neighborhoods are the victims of violence." Ultimately, hiding the reality of real violence is unlikely to curb the tide of violence any more than popular depictions encourage it. My other question is: "Why is there such a

paucity of information on violence prevention?" *The Washington Post Magazine* insisted that while they liked an article I wrote linking masculinity to school shootings, they wanted to wait to publish it until another shooting occurred. "It's a prevention piece," I pleaded to deaf ears. The "copy-cat" theory implicit in media violence censorship also epitomizes the behaviorist approach based on the assumption that children are not capable of being critical or making moral decisions. Sisela Bok (1998) tries to change the debate with a different kind of question emphasizing the capacity to have a critical relationship to the media. She asks: "How can children learn to take a more active and self-protective part in evaluating what they see?" By recognizing that children are capable of learning how to assess what they see and how to make constructive judgments and choices, Bok makes the argument more complex. Is it the media violence that causes real violence or the values depicted in the media that go unquestioned by many viewers? Teaching children critical thinking so that the media and other large institutions are less influential is an almost entirely absent aspect of the *violence in the media* argument. As a text young people can question and engage the media thoughtfully, rendering it innocuous, and even educational.

The *violence in the media* argument does not tend to address issues relating to critical thinking. It is linked, instead, with the popular sixties psychology, advocated by Burrhus Frederic Skinner, and referred to as behaviorism. The theory operates on the level of cerebral processes in an effort to develop a science of human behavior that focuses on modifying behavior through positive and negative reinforcement. By avoiding the impact of emotion, this theory prevents the intervention of more complex

critical analysis. The behaviorist approach lends itself to policy issues, as in gun control issues, and deflects attention from the issues this thesis is trying to expose.

Ignoring the capacity for interpretations and analysis, policy discussions relating to the media, focus more on censorship and rating scales, and then indict parents as responsible for preventing children from viewing certain content. Furthermore, by demanding that the State or Federal government act *morally* to either censor or rate the media, government enters a shaky relationship both with the first amendment, and the principle separating Church from State. Rather than threatening the foundations of the Constitution, examining daily practices in everyday life is necessary for understanding and preventing school violence. This argument also tends to structure the debate so it is left to parents to negotiate the censoring system. Parents, then, become the next fall guys accused of causing school violence.

Parent Responsibility

Contradictory Research

There are many different family types accused of causing school shootings. The most common accusations were directed at divorced and/or working parents (Lacayo, 1998 and The Associated Press, "Bush Aide Blames 'Alienation,'" 2001). The parents' of the boys who killed, however, were largely married, living together, and had at least one parent at home during the day. They were generally considered model "Church-going" parents by the neighbors in their communities (Popyk, "Violence is Seductive to New Breed of Killers; Belluck and Wilgoren, "Caring Parents, No Answers"; Cloud, "Just A Routine School Shooting"; Sack, "Guns and Schools: The Overview"; Egan,

“Santee is Latest Blow”; Firestone, 1999; MSNBC Staff and Wire Reports, “Note From Gunmen”; Wilgoren and Johnson, 1999).

Furthermore, blaming parents is another single-issue explanation deflecting attention away from the fabric of culture; individuals or distinct families are considered “dysfunctional,” and become alibis for an otherwise “healthy” society. This implies that individual families contribute to the high incidence of violence in the United States, rather than more pervasive difficulties. Cal Thomas, author of *Uncommon Sense* and NPR commentator (1998) characterizes this opinion. He writes *violence in the media and lax gun control laws* are mere excuses that miss the real culprits: “*working parents.*” After Arkansas (1998), he wrote: “Some say it's violence on television and in films...that alone seems an incomplete excuse...others say it's guns. But the boys accused in the killings stole guns from relatives who bought them legally for hunting.” Instead, Thomas argues, youth violence develops when “too many children are dumped into day care so that busy, career-oriented parents can pursue lifestyles they believe will bring them happiness” (Thomas, 1998). Thomas commends women who give up these pursuits to go back to the family. “Two professional friends of mine have had enough. They're quitting high-paying, broadcast media jobs to go home to their husbands and children” (Ibid.). Oliver North also supported this position, insisting it was “unconscionable” to blame guns or make it the federal or local government's responsibility; he also indicted bad parenting (Applebome, “Round and Round in the Search For Meaning,” 1998). By trying to blame single and working mothers, this diagnosis ignores the complex relationships taking place within families irrespective of these factors.

In addition to this analysis being inaccurate because so many of the boys came from traditional, two-parent families (See Appendix), Stephanie Coontz, Professor of Family Studies from Evergreen State College, believes this concern is misplaced. She responds to a comment on NPR that chastises mothers who choose to have a baby without a father. Coontz says there is a litany of things parents do, consciously or unconsciously, that pose risks to kids, including having a kid to save a marriage, neglect, parent conflict, a parent or guardian's depression, decaying neighborhoods, and overwork. But, she says, "whatever the disadvantages of the choice, single women making a thoughtful choice to plan for a wanted baby come rather low on my action-needed list" (WNPR, Talk of the Nation, 1999).

In addition to denouncing single mothers and working parents, the parents of the boys who killed were blamed for missing the "warning signs." These boys had pipe bombs in their bedrooms, spoke and wrote often about violence, and each boy made it clear to more than a few people of his intentions to shoot people at school (Dedman, 2000; Belluck, "Students Accused of Plotting"; Blank, "The Kid No One Noticed"; Adams and Malone, 1998; Egan, "Oregon Student Held in Three Killings"). It is clear that parents did miss some cues, but so did teachers, neighbors, clergy, and other members of their communities. Rather than individual parents, complicated familial dynamics constructed within a complex matrix of social institutions may be more culpable. Blaming parents exclusively becomes another possible scapegoat concealing underlying issues, and preventing analysis of larger social and economic forces at work.

Parenting in Context

Parenting roles have changed dramatically through history as technology and other political/social forces have re-designed and re-defined the family. The role of parenting has transformed with the political climate and the economic demands of the society. For instance the industrial revolution in the United States didn't just change the nature of how commodities are produced, it also changed the structure of the family. Children were forced to work to help support their families, challenging the notion of childhood as a social category. In *The Rise and Fall of the American Teenager*, Thomas Hine writes that as children entered the workforce their minds were shaped more by teachers, politicians and saloonkeepers than by their parents' religious and social ideals (Hine, 1999, 126).

Similarly in *The Age of Access* (2000), Jeremy Rifkin argues that in today's hyper-capitalism, production has moved from the preoccupation with expropriating and reshaping matter in the industrial era to an "age of access far more interested in manipulating mind...To be able to expand one's mental presence, to be universally connected so as to affect and shape human consciousness itself, is what motivates commercial activity in every industry" (Rifkin, 2000, 54). The role of parenting is "supported" largely by corporations competing for access so as to manipulate consciousness for profit motives, he argues. Rifkin questions whether there will be any "room left for noncommercial views, opinions, notions, and concepts in a civilization where people rely increasingly on the commercial sphere for ideas by which to live their lives" (Ibid. 55)? Furthermore since the nineties, Rifkin continues, youth culture has been specifically targeted for commodification. "A new genre of cultural intermediaries

was born. Called “*cool hunters*, the mostly young men and women prowl the byways of youth culture looking for new cultural trends that can be packaged, commodified, and sold in the marketplace...(They go) in search of interesting cultural resources that can be prospected and converted into advertising gold and retail sales” (Ibid. 183). Parents are made to feel responsible for “socializing” their children, but other powerful institutions affecting young minds are working hard to manipulate young people to become zealous purchasing agents instead.

Thus corporations powerfully influence families, and government takes an increasingly smaller role. Furthermore, among post-industrial countries the United States has the highest rate of child poverty, is the only one that doesn’t provide some form of childcare for three- to five-year-olds as well as paid leave for parents, and doesn’t have a national health system to deliver accessible, high-quality preventive and prenatal health care. Infant mortality rates have also steadily increased over the last thirty years, and now this country has the fourth highest infant mortality rate of all industrialized countries (Spina, Introduction, 2000). There is very little economic or social support for parents to raise children. In addition, the family has shrunk; once receiving financial and emotional support from large extended families, now the smaller nuclear family of one to two parents and one or more children is largely on their own.

Furthermore, the U.S. is one of the only countries in the world that institute the death penalty for juvenile offenders. Only six countries executed juvenile offenders in the 1990’s: Iran, Nigeria, Pakistan, Saudia Arabia, the United States and Yemen. Criminologist Elliott Currie writes: “The choices are starkly clear. We can continue the harsh combination of Darwinism social policy and reactive juvenile justice that has

brought us the industrial world's worst youth violence or we can begin to put our resources where our knowledge," is—rehabilitation programs (Currie, "In Search of Law and Order," 1998).

Since 1984 when laissez-faire *Reagonomics* became the dominant ideological structure continuing through Clinton's Democratic Presidency and into the present, corporate influence has steadily increased. Rather than the breakdown of *family values*, business influencing families, and the escalating commodification of culture might contribute to increasingly disturbing value systems. Commercials on television routinely advocate competitive acquisitions of cars, bodies, and detergent to avoid being perceived as *less* than one's neighbor. The derision towards those with the "other" car, body, or detergent works to influence individuals to avoid that disdain and buy the winning product. The boys who killed seemed to be trying to avoid being the losing product in their high schools as well.

In this context it is difficult to expect parents to be able to adequately support their children. Nonetheless, the economic and political views of this time continue to support this model. President George W. Bush's response to the 2001 school shooting in Santee, California explicitly placed responsibility on parents. Speaking in response to the shootings he often said: "My job is to say to the Moms and Dads of America, 'your most important job is to love your children with all your heart and all your soul'" (Associated Press, "Bush To Parents: Love Your Kids," 2001). Alan Wolfe, Director of the Boisi Center for Religion in American Public Life at Boston College, says Bush is essentially arguing against Hillary Clinton's "it-takes-a-village" philosophy. Bush's theory seems to be: "It takes a parent. It doesn't take a village" (Ibid.). William Benoit, a professor of

communication at University-Missouri-Columbia, sees Bush's parental appeal as a way to take "pseudo-action" against gun violence (Ibid.).

In light of this mentality, lawsuits have been directed at the parents of the boys who killed, again deflecting attention away from cultural problems and pointing instead towards individual familial dysfunctions. The Law has granted millions of dollars to the parents of the victims killed (Belkin, 1999), helping to ensure that blame is directed here.

These cases also raise new questions regarding a parent's legal responsibility for their children's actions. Short of child abuse or neglect, can parents be faulted if they had no knowledge of the crime before it occurred? Can parents be legally blamed for using child-rearing techniques that others might consider inadequate? Should parents be criminally culpable for their child's gun activity anymore than other behaviors--especially when their children have the right to use guns under certain state regulations? Studies do focus on both psychological and sociological effects of different child-rearing techniques (Lambert, 1979). Research that certain child-rearing techniques produce killers, however, is non-existent.

It is likely that the relationship the boys who killed had with their parents is a significant factor, as are all the single-issues blamed exclusively for the crimes. Blaming them unilaterally, however, is unfair, dangerous, and misguided. It targets individuals and prevents larger awareness. Many of these parents missed warning signs in their private lives, just as other visible cues were ignored in more public spaces. Examining multiple factors and their relationship with one another is imperative for understanding and prevention. What must be explored are the social influences on parents (and guns and media) interacting with other social institutions with which the children engaged.

Masculinity expectations emerge in this exploration as one of the central themes underlying these social influences and negatively affecting young boys.

Other old-time attitudes combined with escalating pressures on young teenagers can also become destructive in and of themselves. Former President George H.W. Bush said: "We want an America that is more like the Waltons, and less like the Simpsons" (Sehr, 1998). The implication is that families should conform to mainstream standards and suppress difference, and individuality. Recall again Eric Harris' note explaining why he committed the shooting: "Your children are like sheep..." (Harris, 1999). Author Barbara Sehr responded after the Oregon shooting, in a way that may have addressed Harris' concerns. She said it is the very culture of the Waltons that can contribute to the kind of intolerance of difference that many of these children experience. Sehr says to Bush, "It's time we told 'John-Boy,' that there is a brighter future ahead if he, and everyone else, begins to reach out to the struggling Bart Simpsons." "The choice," she says, "is building sensitivity detectors in our children's minds, or building metal detectors around our communities" (Sehr, 1998). Teaching sensitivity and respect for different ways of being is not just a parents' job, it should be the mandate of all responsible social institutions, including schools, community centers and police.

When parents are exclusively blamed, and especially working or single parents, who were not the majority category in the shootings, the high incidence of violence in this country rages under a false shield. The social mores encouraged by corporate advertising, and the norms of masculinity associated with violence, as well as other systemic issues continue unabated as these single-issue scapegoats are pegged as the real culprits. Psychoanalysis has also been used to analyze individual familial dysfunctions to

explain violent or otherwise antisocial behavior. While these ideas make an essential contribution, in a vacuum of the larger social context, they become inadequate to the task.

An even more direct attack on the *individual* is that school violence is not just caused by individual families, but more specifically by distinctly evil people.

Evil

Bad Character

Another popular accusation was directed at an evil human nature. The argument is that children are inherently evil and need socialization, or that individual young people are “bad seeds.” This argument most vehemently deflects attention away from systemic issues in the culture, and blames each incidence of violence--in a country with the highest rate of violence in the industrialized world--exclusively on that specific person.

After Arkansas (1998), Richard Rodriguez, an editor of *Pacific News Service*, epitomized this view when he wrote an opinion to the *Los Angeles Times*. He argues that it is normal for boys to be cruel to other children:

In truth, nothing is surprising about the cruelty of children. It is as routine as a boring summer day when kids torture insects or animals. All of us remember from our own childhood, bullies and midget tyrants. One child puts a razor blade in a bar of soap in the school bathroom; another places broken glass in the playground sand...All week long, one had the sense that none of the experts had read William Golding's *Lord of the Flies* or been to a summer camp (Rodriguez, 1998).

Rodriguez uses a work of fiction to proclaim definitively that the nature of children/mankind has always been vicious, and further implies that boys are simply not capable of being self-reflective and responsible for their behaviors. Even if aggression is innate, however, how aggressive impulses are manifested and directed is still within the province of socialization. Theoretically, most human impulses are “socialized” such that people do not unleash random aggression on one another. These values are generally taught from a young age, younger than the pre-teens depicted in *Lord of the Flies*.

Rodriguez argues that boys as old as fifteen to eighteen are somehow innately driven to kill, and he further implies that this behavior is impervious to constructive social conditioning from responsible social institutions.

Theorists as diverse as Sigmund Freud and Thomas Hobbes argue that human nature is naturally violent. Freud wrote that men are always tempted to satisfy their innate aggression on one another, and he argued that civilization is the means to temper these destructive instincts (Freud, *Civilization and its Discontents*, 1930).

Thomas Hobbes wrote that a dictator is imperative to prevent the human drive culminating in a “war of all against all” (Hobbes, 1962). My research shows how socialized masculinity itself, may be failing in the “civilizing” task to which Freud refers, encouraging boys to be violent rather than discouraging it as Freud contends. Institutional structures are similarly encouraging the link between masculinity and violence, thus, failing to protect community members from aggressive actions as Hobbes cautioned.

In contrast, recall again that Eric Fromm argues there is a difference between the innate impulse towards self-defense, and the human capacity towards destruction for the sake of domination and cruelty. Animals do not torture, he writes, this is only the province of humans. In fact, Fromm writes: “The degree of destructiveness increases with the increased development of civilization, rather than the opposite” (Fromm, 1961, 4). It is only in the human species that one finds mass murderers, and the pre-meditated capacity for mass destruction.

It is important then, to broach a discussion of how concepts like *good* and *evil* are constructed, rather than innately developed. The concept of good and evil is predicated

on a binary structure of absolutes. Rifkin argues that starting with Bacon's scientific method, and much of the later Enlightenment, common sense perceptions became structured around bifurcations. "A private property regime based on the exclusive possession and control of 'things' flourishes in a milieu in which everything is either an active subject or a passive object" (Rifkin, 2000, 190). Similarly, this project exposes the ramifications of widespread destructive binaries. The boys who killed were objectified by the "preps and jocks," and perceived as evil. In turn, the boys who killed objectified the "preps and jocks."

John P. Mitchell, in *Powers of Good and Evil*, (Clough and Mitchell, 2001) argues that "evil" is constructed as a "fear of excess." In this context, since "preps and jocks" represent the "American boy ideal," deviation from this closely circumscribed model becomes threatening. The boys who killed were already skinnier, shorter, less "masculine" than the "preps and jocks," and perceived, perhaps, as menacing the tightly restricted masculine model the "preps and jocks" represented. The social resistance embodied by the boys who killed, who mostly wore black trench coats and associated with Goth culture (consisting of make-up and hyper-femininity codes), may have been perceived as, and may indeed have been a form of, social resistance, and therefore ostracized as "evil."

Mitchell writes that: "representations of rapid social change...set up images of evil precisely in order to shoot them down. Creating the Devil, as a power of evil, serves to demonstrate that the powers of good can control him" (Ibid. 8). I also argue that the boys who killed had become this scapegoat in the contemporary period of rapid social change. Such changes are elaborated in the section on *parenting* where I argue that the

effect of laissez-faire Reaganomics, and the re-organization of economic forces towards selling services that control ideas (Rifkin, 2000), escalated a social transformation. In the conclusion of this thesis, I also argue that pressure on young boys to be more “masculine,” bigger, stronger, more violent, than in past decades, also contributes to this phenomenon. Mitchell writes that “anxieties about contemporary social transformations emerge as anxieties about possession and threat to the body” (Ibid. 9). The division between “preps and jocks” and the boys who killed were largely drawn according to differences in physical attributes and athletic prowess. The “excess femininity” perceived in the boys who killed by the “preps and jocks” was demonized, and helped accentuate the differences between them, reaffirming the “preps and jocks” dominance as the school representatives of manhood. The micro-wars taking place in these high schools become reflections of the larger conflicts and anxieties taking place in society. For instance, as the distance between rich and poor exacerbated in the nineties, the inner-cities were more vehemently referred to as deviant, and large sections of this population were imprisoned.

Many of the boys who killed began to identify with the “evil” references with which they were associated, and then admitted to a form of Satan worship (See Appendix; Sacks, “Southern Town Stunned by Arrests”; “Alleged Shooters Known as Troublemakers,” 1998). They began to embody and re-appropriate this attack perhaps, as a means to embrace rather than give-up power. There is a national Church of Satan, founded by a man named Anton Szandor LaVey. The principles written in *The Nine Satanic Statements* of this group may lend insight as to other reasons why the boys were attracted to these ideas. One tenet of this group is: “Satan represents vengeance instead

of turning the other cheek!” (Szandor, 1967 and 1987). This seems to be a motivating thesis for all the boys who killed, tired of enduring the abuse they experienced for so long. Their actions reveal the potential devastation incurred when creating constructions of *evil* to distinguish from *good*.

Arendt’s (Arendt, 1994) famous theory of the “banality of evil” further describes conditions where people are socialized to find everyone superfluous, both victims and aggressors. The boys who killed arguably fit this paradigm. In addition to specifically killing their bullies and ex-girlfriends, they shot many students who had not directly harmed them, and parents they said they loved. Five were suicidal; two of them successfully killed themselves. When Carneal was subdued after the Kentucky (1997) shooting his first words were, “Kill me please. Please kill me” (Adams, “Teen-ager’s ever-changing stories frustrated police,” 1998). In Oregon (1998), Kinkel similarly announced at the end of his shooting, “Just shoot me, shoot me now.” Kinkel remarked before his own shooting that he couldn’t believe the other boys who killed “didn’t kill themselves instead of being arrested.” (PBS, Frontline, 1999) Wurst (Pennsylvania 1998) said he meant to kill himself, not others, and Harris and Klebold (Colorado 1999), successfully killed themselves with their last shots in the Columbine massacre.

It is incumbent on us, following Arendt, to look at the extent to which people are seen as dispensable today, and particularly how masculinity may get defined in such a way that encourages this “banality of evil” or the capacity to not care for others at all. The boys who killed stated clearly that their motivations were fueled by revenge. Recall again Woodham’s statement to the Assistant Principal that subdued him at the massacre: “The world has wronged me,” he said (Sack, 1997). These boys believed that they had a

legitimate right to retaliate. Belief in retribution, of course, is not without historical precedent. Progressive Era rehabilitative crime intervention experiments were replaced by high stakes punitive correction measures in the late sixties. Prisons have proliferated so much since the eighties that their cost in most states outnumber funds spent on education. The death penalty has returned in full force and the idea that the bullies of society must get their due is considered to many, “common sense.” President George W. Bush is one of the strongest proponents of retribution, and the death penalty. America will remember his infamous gleeful look at the 2000 Presidential debates with Al Gore when asked about the extremely high rate of executions in Texas where he governed.

President Bush also called the kids who killed, “evil.” He said after the shooting in California 2001 that it was a “disgraceful act of cowardice” and that the best prevention is “to teach children right from wrong” (The Associated Press, “Bush Condemns School Shooting,” 2001). What does it mean to call these deeds, “acts of cowardice”? What would Bush consider a courageous way for these kids to express their rage at being harassed? Ideally, it would entail talking to the adults in their lives, involving the school and their families, and working together to change the culture of their schools and communities. However, the implication in the word “cowardice” implies cowering from direct and violent confrontation. One of the synonyms for “cowardly” in the electronic Seiko American Heritage Electronic Dictionary is *unmanly*. “Cowardice” is further defined as the negation of courage: “the quality of mind that enables one to face danger with confidence, resolution, and firm control of oneself” (Seiko, American Heritage Electronic Dictionary).

These boys seemed to be driven to kill because they believed they could not beat the larger boys who physically and emotionally harassed them, in any other way. In an effort to no longer *cower* from their enemies, it seems, they turned to a fast-food power, using guns to kill. The irony in Bush's condemnation of the boys is that it helps reveal the contemporary socialization that reinforces the hyper-masculinity that drove these boys to kill in the first place. Bush effectively called them *unmanly*; exactly the kind of attack that seemed to motivate them to find a way to demonstrate the extent of their potential prowess. "They should have been able to take it," said one of the jocks that had harassed Klebold and Harris before the shooting (O'Shaughnessy, 1999). The expectation for male power, infallibility, and unemotional personae is implicated in these comments, and exposed here as a contributing factor—the menace of *socialized masculinity*. The boys are once again admonished that they should have been able to face their enemies in a "fair" fight, or they should have been able to withstand the emotional abuse, "like a man" (The Associated Press, "Bush Condemns School Shooting," 2001).

Other members of government also blamed the shooting mainly on bad character. Richard Gephardt in the House of Representatives said: "Ultimately, the answer will not be found in state legislatures or the halls of Congress. The answer lies somewhere in the hopelessness and the hateful hearts of the children who have lost their way." And Pat Buchanan said: "There was something sick and wrong inside these boys. I don't know how to stop it" (Ferguson, "What Politicians Can't Do," 1999).

By calling these boys evil, the individual is again implicated, rather than the larger culture and socialization processes. A Teacher's Guide for violence prevention highlights: "Attributing violence to supernatural 'evil' also allows us to deflect attention

away from the social, economic, and political institutions that for many years have been producing males at pandemic rates” (Katz and Earp, “Teacher’s Guide: The School Shootings”). The demarcation of good and evil as stark binary oppositions contributes to the social motivation manifested by “prep and jocks” to ostracize the boys who appeared to embody excess femininity, and were therefore perceived as threatening and evil. If *good* did not depend on evil as a means of contrast, and this culture didn’t depend on binary divisions, than the boys who killed might not have been used as scapegoats in the first place, and the shootings may have been averted. Calling them evil again detracts attention from these more complicated social processes and prevents awareness of the “evil” embedded in *normal socialized masculinity*.

No Explanation

Missing the Violence

One particularly perplexing response to the school shootings was no explanation at all. Experts declared that violence was statistically down, and that the twelve school shootings between 1996 and 2001 were not indicative of a pattern. Studies addressed in this section conclude that there is no cause for concern.

Echoed by many others, Vincent Schiraldi, Director of the Justice Policy Institute, issued such a statement responding to the different shootings in suburban schools. “My answer is always the same: ‘I cannot explain it, because no such trend exists’” (Schiraldi, 1998; Davidson, 1999; CNN 1997; Monmany, 1998; Stolberg, 1999). Schiraldi explained that the shooting in Mississippi 1997 took place just as Attorney General Janet Reno

announced a 30% drop in juvenile homicides. He lamented the fact that the press buried Reno's statement in the wake of the Mississippi 1997 incident. He argued that these were isolated incidents and not part of a new historical phenomenon.

This same type of response also came after the Colorado 1999 shooting.

Dismissing all possible causes, Sheryl Stolberg wrote in the *New York Times*:

The sheriffs missed the Web site ravings. The psychiatrist missed the hidden rage. The parents missed the pipe bombs. If only somebody had spotted the warning signs, a terrible tragedy might have been averted. That is a comforting thought for a nation scarred and grieving. But viewed through the prism of science, it isn't necessarily true.

Indeed if there is anything left to be said about the recent tragedy in Littleton, Colorado it may be this: the cold, hard reality of the deadliest school massacre in American history is that it was the statistical equivalent of a needle in a haystack. Because such events are so rare, and because it is impossible to eliminate risk from life, there may be no larger lessons to draw, and no way to prevent another one (Stolberg, 1999).

Using science to lend authority to her analysis, Stolberg joins a national denial and further confounds the issues (Willis, 1999).

"Discursive violence occurs when the historical *work of meaning* is obscured and meaning is fetishized as natural and not recognized as being produced..." writes Peter McLaren, Zeus Leonardo, and Ricky Lee Allen (emphasis in original, 2001, 71). The school shootings had the potential to make visible the alienation and discontent roiling American suburbs. Insisting that there is no problem after twelve deadly school shootings renders cultural stresses erupting in violence invisible again. The problem of violence continues to be a challenge in inner cities according to such experts, not in the suburbs. Such denial contributes to the false consciousness heralding suburbs as the watershed of success for families, the space safe from *deviant* cities. Jacques Derrida

argues that language is governed by rules that are less about positively defining what something is than about negatively defining what something is not (Derrida, 1976).

Foucault focuses on the idea that power is positive in that it constructs meaning.

Together these theories help explain how violence is positively constructed as an inner-city problem, and negatively defined or made invisible in the suburbs.

In the “no explanation” argument, experts argue that the school shootings don’t exist as a pattern indicating cause for concern. The implication is that attention should stay focused on the *culture of poverty* in urban areas, thus safeguarding the concept that violence is the province of certain races or classes who behave inappropriately rather than an indication of stresses in culture more generally.

This silence becomes a form of symbolic violence, in Bourdieu’s terms (2001). Symbolic violence works best without outright oppressive consequences, but through disciplinary mechanisms that make it the precondition for participating in symbolic interactions. Thus, there are no physically punitive consequences for acknowledging the violence in the suburbs, but the dominant literature, discourse, public policy, and other social disciplines rely on the assumption that violence is only an inner-city problem, as if it is a fact. Foucault writes: “Power is tolerable only on condition that it mask a substantial part of itself. Its success is proportional to its ability to hide its own mechanisms...” (Foucault, 1975). The “no explanation” theory hides behind the *science prism*, *statistical truth*, and ‘*expert*’ voices. In *Science as Power*, Stanley Aronowitz writes about science as a hegemonic discourse hiding the subjective power that infuses what is then considered “common sense.” In these cases the idea that statistically violence is down, and that experts believe school shootings are not a new social problem,

and that rationally science would reveal that this isn't a trend, combine to hide the still high and pervasive nature of violence in this culture.

Violence in the inner city becomes the alibi that protects violence in suburbs--fraternity initiations and hazing, car racing, sports fights, bullying, racism, classism--from perception. The act of "not seeing" constructs the terms of the debate in such a way that inner city youth are blamed for the violence in their communities, while suburban youth are absolved from their participation altogether. An African-American teenager from a New Jersey middle school succinctly summarizes this point: "...Most of the time when a White person get killed, he or she was an innocent bystander. But if he was Black or Mexican, it was gang related" (Obidiah, 2000, 61).

The tendency to find *no meaning* has become a means of escape and diversion from the increasing challenges of contemporary culture. Many prominent theorists agree that resignation and adversity to meaning characterize the current cultural climate. Irving Howe describes contemporary culture as paralyzed by "a widely shared passivity" (During, 1993); Henry Levine refers to "a loss of strong beliefs or causes" (Ibid.); Leslie Fiedler and Susan Sontag find the world "adverse to meanings" and "in flight from interpretation" (Ibid.); Richard Rorty writes about "the language of contingency," manifesting itself in a kindness and tolerance that ultimately means indifference and resignation (Ibid.). Similarly, the "no explanation" reactions to these crimes, deny the possibility for meaning and explanation that could otherwise expose important cultural cues.

The common refrain, "It can't happen here" becomes a method of denial, a means to ignore or condone insidious aspects of social reality. The harassment the Columbine

boys experienced daily was highly visible in the school as reports from school members revealed after the crime. Howard F. Stein asks in *Disposable Youth: The 1999 Columbine High School Massacre as American Metaphor*: “What makes an entire nation resist the knowing of atrocities and become perpetrators or passive on-lookers to atrocities?” (Stein, 2000, 217). In other words, why didn’t anyone in these communities intervene?

As quoted in USA Today, after the March 2001 incident in California, there is still the belief that even alive, Charles Andrew Williams “left us with no more answers than Dylan Klebold and Eric Harris did dead in Littleton, Colorado” (Raasch, “Despite School Shootings, Gun-control Off Agenda,” 2001). Instead, the article continues: the shootings are becoming so common as to engender in many people, “sadness and resignation, more than horror and resolve” (Ibid.). Yet each boy who killed went to great lengths to warn their town of their plans “to shoot everybody,” and many of them made their concerns painfully clear both before and after their shooting (See Appendix). That such extremely loud and visible statements could be missed entirely can only be the work of a cultural consciousness steeped in denial. This denial allowed, and ultimately encouraged, the boys to execute their plans.

The “no explanation” response, in part, helps explain the theoretical move away from Kant’s universalizing theories in modernity. Universal theories can also hide the complexities inherent in an indeterminate social life. In fact the “no explanation” perspective become an anti-theory or a universal theory of another kind. Rather than the widespread denial and resignation noted by many--efforts need to be made to move beyond indifference and resignation, toward multiple truths and meanings. There is

always a way out, even in the moment of despair characterized by the loss of meaning in “no explanation.” Nietzsche, followed by Foucault asserts, “There are no facts, only interpretations,” no one meaning, but countless meanings (Nietzsche, 1966). Then the way is paved to make some sense of these seemingly senseless murders, to see beyond current notions of good and evil, and what Ellen Willis’ characterizes as the “Don’t think: Smile” phenomenon in decades of denial (Willis, 1999). Moving beyond binary oppositions and scientific shields will help unveil the destructive norms in need of new interpretations.

Part II: Masculinity as Probable Cause

Masculinity, Adolescence, and Violence

I have thus far engaged the literature on school shootings that claim the cause was a single social problem. This section addresses the literature that does engage interactions between masculinity and culture but still neglects the visible misogyny and homophobia patterns this thesis exposes among these cases. First, I present theorists who link masculinity issues to the school shootings, and then I discuss how masculinity expectations are an underlying component of all the five single-issues individually blamed for these crimes. Exploring masculinity expectations supported by economic and therefore multiple social institutions emerges as a crucial component for understanding and preventing school shootings.

In *Adolescent Violence and Identity Vulnerability*, Mark Bracher, Editor of the journal, *Psychoanalysis for Culture and Society*, (2000) argues that in the absence of a more complex and interactive analysis, individual risk factors are mistakenly employed as phobic objects (guns, media, drugs), and individual protective factors are falsely elevated to fetish objects (family values, metal detectors, drug tests, censorship). Bracher argues that when multiple risk factors combine with one another, the affected individual identity becomes more vulnerable, producing a need for identity-defending and supporting behavior. Bracher argues that this need often takes the form of violence.

Within this paradigm, violence is not the result of individual pathology, but rests instead in cultural and social factors embedded in common sense and norms. The

symbolic violence inherent in many social institutions is surely influenced by the incidence of manifest violence in the United States (Bracher, 2000, 190).

Bracher writes that all forms of aggression are a response to a perceived threat to the self, either preservative or sadomasochistic. The former is an effort to negate a threat to one's identity: gender, race, self-esteem, or ideals. The latter represents an internal object world that makes the individual feel constantly threatened (2000, 192).

What aspects of contemporary culture exacerbate an individual's sense of alienation? *Recognition* is considered a central component for ego stability. Lack of recognition for adolescents may take the form of name-calling, for instance, "gay" or "faggot," as the boys who killed were often taunted. For adult men it more often relates to economic issues such as failed employment. Violence is then an effort to defend against these types of threats to the self, to re-establish some sense of dominance, respect, and status. Different kinds of violence may manifest in different cultural realms.

Recognition is then, a necessary, but not sufficient condition for maintaining a stable identity. Bracher elaborating on Lacan writes that in this culture, stability is often dependent on a fantasy of unity and coherence produced through the three different registers of experience: *The Real, Imaginary, and Symbolic*.

The Real constitutes the affective-physiological register. An affective equilibrium may be maintained through the use of mood-altering substances such as food, drink, caffeine, and nicotine, as well as illegal drugs; seeking and engaging in stimulating activities like sex, exercise, extreme sports, and interpersonal conflicts, and consuming arousing or soothing cultural products, such as music television, film, literature, dance, and sporting events. Violence can support this identity register by providing an

adrenaline rush as well as the exhausted satiety that follows. A person can then become dependent on the physiological effects of violence to deal with their anxiety or depression in the same way that someone else might turn to drugs in search of their equilibrium.

The *Imaginary* is the perceptual-imagistic register. In this register, the individual seeks visual recognition from others. Adolescents often seek deference, a reversal of their usual role in deferring to adults; most people seek respect or acknowledgement from persons with whom they come in contact. People engage in many activities to try to win the respect of others such as altering bodies (weight, strength, stamina, agility, and shape); grooming (hair, teeth, nails, skin); clothing (size, color, style); or physical environment (homes, cars). Violence can affect the perceptual-imagistic register through the display of physical prowess via knives, guns, or bombs. Certain sneakers, jackets, or specific color clothes can come to represent the strength of a certain gang or social group, expanding the visual-spatial environment for that individual. For the “preps and jocks,” conventional codes of manhood were used to demand respect. For the boys who killed, associating with the phallus incarnated from Marilyn Manson’s appropriated hyper-femininity was used as a means for demanding this form of recognition.

The *Symbolic* order structures the linguistic-conceptual identity: the individual seeks recognition through ideals, roles, or positions. It includes labels of gender and sexual identification, as well as national, racial/ethnic, religious, political, and occupational identities. Recognition is received from others as a result of positions. Violence arises in the linguistic order, for instance, if an adolescent is called a feminizing name like “sissy” and the boy seeks to prove his more masculine role by becoming

physically dominating. Lacan's *Real*, *Imaginary*, and *Symbolic* registers help to reveal the etiology of the boys' violent responses. Understanding the complex desire for recognition can help explain the multiple threats to masculinity the young boys may have experienced, as well as their motivation towards violence.

Howard Stein (2000, 217) also dismisses some of the typical scapegoats: "parental responsibility," "the power of the peer group," "bad genes," and "vulnerable temperament." This litany becomes our "cultural psychology," an extension of ethnocentrism. The mistaken conclusion is: "The way we view the world is the world" (Ibid. 219). Our cultural psychology tends to blame the individual, rather than examining underlying economic, social, or cultural structures. For most cultural atrocities, questions focus on individual motivation, family history, and personality profiles. Stein argues against an investigation of a "Who dunnit?" sort looking for the "lone gunman" or "crazed worker."

Stein continues that the culture of competitive sports was central to the Columbine high school culture in much the same way as winning is central in corporate business in America. Americans "don't remember who comes in second." Since the Columbine killers were considered "geeks" and "losers" by the successful "jocks," and the adults (teachers and parents) either verbally or tacitly supported this hierarchy, the boys felt humiliated. Adult men, according to Susan Faludi (2000), tend to experience similar anxiety in the workplace regarding potential loss of employment. The high school culture becomes a microcosm of this adult male competition.

Harris and Klebold's (Colorado 1999) drive towards violent male power can then be viewed as a repetition compulsion re-enacting a power struggle that in their minds

could be resolved and mastered this time. These writers look exclusively at the Columbine massacre. Yet visible patterns in the other school shootings, and in recent adult massacres, also reveal the boys' impotent experiences imposed from an external culture, and ultimately underlying these crimes

In *The Relationship Between Shame and Rage: Conceptualizing the Violence at Columbine High School*, (2000) Dina Spiegel and Judith L. Alpert argue that "Shame is the tension between how one wants to be seen and how one actually is." Shame is also a powerful method of social control. Shame is used socially to provoke guilt, and to promote obedience to social prohibitions. Harris and Klebold (Colorado 1999) were considered fringe members of The Trenchcoat Mafia, already an outsider group (Cullen, "Outsiders Even Among the Outsiders," 1999). Their sense of shame combined with frustrations at an inability to attain social expectations, ultimately prevented efforts towards conformity, and instead, incited resistance and action against the codes to which they seemed to be unable to adhere.

Group dynamics reconstruct early object-relations, according to Pamela Sandler and Judith L. Alpert in *Violence and Group Dynamics in the High School: The Columbine School Shootings* (2000). "There is a group mentality that is greater than the collection of its members." Melanie Klein defines the earliest form of splitting as the "tendency for the infantile ego to split impulses and objects" in order "to keep separate the loved object from the dangerous one." The infant needs to believe that the care-taking parent is wholly good and protective in order to believe that he will be safe from the "hostile world...that would destroy him" (Klein, 248). In this light, the boys who killed, and the jocks that abused those boys initially, both perceived each other in this

“good” and “bad” split. Each group was then meant to contain the “bad parent,” to preserve the belief and attachment to the fantasy of the “good parent.”

Sandler and Alpert (2000) argue that Klebold and Harris (Colorado 1999) and other members of the outsiders represented the “dangerous object,” and served the needs of the rest of their classmates to survive without conflict or discomfort. They write that adolescents revisit these early struggles to develop a tolerable identity, safe from the hostile world around them. Harris and Klebold (Colorado 1999) held the rage of the group as a whole and acted as containers for the group’s aggression and anger. The larger group was able to display their anger and aggression towards them through socially sanctioned taunts in adolescent peer groups. Harris and Klebold’s defensive violence may then be a reaction to this splitting, and an effort to restore their sense of themselves as “the good object” and instead, demonize the other.

Hilary Neroni in *The Men of Columbine: Violence and Masculinity in American Culture and Film* (2000), argues that violence acts as a masculinity signifier in that it is a reaction to a loss of masculinity, and that it serves as the object of an economic exchange between men. Within the military, gangs, and among actors in film, higher degrees of violence represent greater identification with masculinity. Klebold and Harris (Colorado 1999) reacted violently in an attempt to reinstate their missing manhood. They vented their rage on the popular kids, who seemed to have “it”--the phallic signifier--and who were complicit in the force demanding Harris and Klebold concede defeat in the masculinity hierarchy. Franz Fanon writes: “At the level of individuals, violence is a cleansing force. It frees the native from his inferiority complex and from his despair and inaction; it makes him fearless and restores his self-respect” (Franz Fanon, *The Wretched*

of the Earth, 1961, 94). The “mystifying” actions of the boys who killed become easier to comprehend in this light.

In *Separation and Socialization: A Feminist Analysis of the School Shootings at Columbine*, Rebecca Y. Mai and Judith L. Alpert (Mai and Alpert, 2000) write that boys identify with “aspects of the father’s role, or what they fantasize to be the male role, rather than with the father as a person they know.” Because a boy will define his masculinity in opposition to femininity, masculinity becomes “that which is not feminine or involved with women.” Internally he tries to deny his dependence on his mother, while externally he represses the feminine side of himself (2000, 265). William Pollack in *Real Boys* also writes that being a man has come to mean being strong and not expressing vulnerability. In order to deal with the inevitable shame of having a “feminine” side, boys “mask their emotions and ultimately their true selves” (Pollack, 1998, xxiv). Such cultural psychoanalytic and social psychological perspectives help shift the examination of the shootings from the realm of the individual to the more multifaceted cultural sphere.

Masculinity Expectations Underlying Single-Issue Explanations

While the individual scapegoats in and of themselves can't explain the crimes, taken together they can contribute to the examination of these cases in the context of their relationship to masculinity expectations.

Guns

Whether strict or loose *gun control laws* are hailed as the means to prevent school shootings, the relationship between guns, violence, and masculinity is implicated. Accusations proliferate against the NRA for marketing guns to children. The Violence Policy Center's director of federal policy, Kristen Rand, has been outspoken against ads like this one in *Gun Press* magazine regarding an assault weapon for sale:

It is one mean looking dude...considered cool and Ramboish by the teenage crowd; to a man they love the AP9 at first sight. Stuffed to the brim with Nyclad hollow points, the pistol is about as wicked a piece as you can keep by your pillow...Take a look at one, And let your *teenage son* tag along. Ask him what he thinks (Anderson, 1999, 28, emphasis added).

In addition to targeting children, such ads clearly connect guns to masculinity. Through such marketing strategies boys are encouraged to believe the gun will imbue them with an immediately powerful manhood. In this one, the gun is considered "one mean looking dude" and "Ramboish," the ultimate prototype of masculine violence and power. The ad is targeted specifically to a "teenage son." The language is also trying to be hip as it addresses the "teenage crowd." Words like "Ramboish," "wicked," and

“dude,” target a young audience hoping to find quick fixes to achieve an imminent manhood they impatiently wait. The gun offers the fast-food masculinity the ad helps to fetishize.

There is also a homoerotic aspect to the ad that seems to encourage men to perceive their gun as a significant partner. The ad reads: “to a man they love the AP at first sight.” The gun ad markets the weapon as a replacement for a relationship with a real person, and exerts pressure instead to develop a stalwart masculinity that rejects all aspects of femininity, both in others and themselves. Encouraging the boy to reject real intimacy, and choose instead to purchase a hyper-masculine signifier, works because it is predicated on an inculcated fear of intimacy. His concurrent alienation and loneliness may cause the teenage boy to be particularly vulnerable to buying masculinity signifiers, hoping to find his missing *jouissance*, “fulfillment.”

Recently such associations have become commonplace on mainstream television commercials, not just in gun magazines. The TV advertisement for Chrysler cars, for instance, is “DRIVE=LOVE” (Chrysler, TV. 2002). The message implies “sex drive=car=love.” Intimacy with people is not necessary. With capitalist dependence on immediate gratification that compels impulsive purchases, boys are encouraged to fulfill sex drives with commodities in lieu of connections with others. Having fulfilling relationships with real people might decrease their dependence on buying masculine signifiers for self-esteem. The Chrysler Internet site has a similarly homoerotic seduction: “This is a drop-dead gorgeous six-passenger vehicle that people are going to fall in love with,” says Jim Schroer, Executive Vice President of Global Sales and Marketing (Chrysler, Internet, 2002). An Acura commercial depicts a man riding off in

his new car, and simultaneously cell phoning his girlfriend to break-up with her, so he can drive off with his true love, the car. Replacing the woman with the masculine signifier is not understated, but directly associated, advocating the purchase of masculine signifiers, rather than seeking emotional intimacy with a real person. Fulfillment, then, lies in this acquisition rather than through relationships with people, the ad communicates. This necessarily leaves men more alienated, and with greater proclivities towards buying more of such commodities. They are encouraged to satisfy intimacy needs with material objects, another unattainable masculinity expectation, and to fear the intimacy they might otherwise develop with anyone associated with femininity.

Guns have a particularly clear-cut relationship to masculinity, both literally and figuratively. In all these cases boys complained about being called a “fag” or “small” (See Appendix). Guns then, may have helped transform the boys’ injured masculinity into a feeling of strength; through shooting, compensatory power could be exerted. Guns became a means for the boys who killed to take control rather than be controlled, subordinating “popular boys” with the power of their ammunition, and similarly vanquishing girls who “dumped them.”

To describe the complexity of masculinities, Connell identifies four types: hegemonic, subordinate, marginalized, and complicit. Hegemonic refers to the form of masculinity most legitimized in contemporary Western society; military heroes, successful businessmen, or powerful politicians may represent this type. Men who have this power embody stereotypical masculine traits such as being unemotional, tough, authoritative, and controlling. Boys most clearly differentiated from women and homosexuals are classified here, at the top of masculinities’ hierarchy. On the other hand,

gays and men perceived as gay fit at the bottom of the ladder. Their masculinity is subordinated. Then, in a culture where white, heterosexual, wealthy men hold the greatest power, marginalized masculinity refers to men stigmatized by race or economics in a dynamic relationship with conventionally hegemonic men or the hegemonic men of their own race, class, etc. Complicit masculinity comprises the majority of men who also do not meet omnipotent expectations of manhood, but who subsequently benefit from the subordination of women and gays. Even though they are not hegemonic, they receive a "patriarchal dividend" in that they reap status-power benefits just by virtue of being men (Connell, 1995, 79). This is more complicated relating to race and class in that men of color who are hegemonic in the field of sports, for instance, do not necessarily convey that power on others in their race or social class. The patriarchal dividend is then, much smaller (Ibid.).

Within this framework, Connell suggests that the adult gun lobby in America asserts a specifically masculine power through rifles. Gun owners tend to experience efforts to control guns as "emasculating." "While hegemonic masculinity is typically invisible as a fixed component of most daily institutions, the gun lobby exists as the visible exposure of these power relations" (Ibid. 212), Connell writes. In the high school social microcosm, "preps and jocks" are hegemonic, constantly asserting their difference and dominance over other boys who lack masculinity signifiers. These "subordinate" boys are then associated with homosexuality and femininity, and in these cases they were specially called "gay," "faggot" or some other feminizing reference by the "preps and jocks" that asserted their more powerful masculinity in the school.

Media Violence

Blaming *violence in the media* also misses a crucial point relating to masculinity-- that part of what is encouraged, not just in the media but through mainstream cultural norms, is a macho masculinity. In this way violence in the media intersects with gun issues. They are both strongly associated with hegemonic types of masculinities or as easy ways to achieve masculinity. A quick perusal of some of the most popular television shows and movies since the eighties depict strong men achieving their goals with guns and violence, including most visibly: James Bond, *The Sopranos*, *Rambo*, and *The Terminator*. Video game violence sometimes portray mock military scenes, also a male-dominated, macho genre. My research shows that it is not necessarily the violence that is so influential, but the re-presentations of social pressures for men to win female adoration and male admiration by violently controlling and dominating others. Most typical media reinforces the association between masculinity, strength, power, and violence.

Recently the popular film, *Vanilla Sky*, depicts a young man initially teeming with muscles, power, and vigor. He is the object of omnipresent female desire, and the envy of other less powerful (less hegemonic) men. His popularity plummets however, when he is disfigured after an attack plotted by one of his jealous women. After laying in a coma for months, he emerges facially disfigured, without his muscular physique and with his power base shaken. Without his masculinity markers, his life is, in effect, destroyed. Instead of pushing people around, he is the one who is bullied. The film becomes effectively an advertisement/warning for maintaining a hyper-masculinity or risking total loss and impotency (*Vanilla Sky*, 2002).

In *Joe Somebody*, a middle-aged man loses the respect of his colleagues when he is beat-up in the parking lot by a fellow worker in front of his daughter. He then immediately recoups this respect ad infinitum when he challenges his bully to another violent duel. The fact that Joe was willing to stand-up to this bully ultimately won Joe not just basic respect, but a promotion, a raise, and his own parking space. In the end it was enough that he had not backed down, and Joe Somebody was able to keep his masculinity signifiers without engaging in the final fight. The message indicated that just his courage and willingness to fight, and his capacity to intimidate, was enough to maintain masculinity status. Barring this display of mindless “masculine” courage, however, Joe Somebody would have remained in his old dead-end job, without his parking space, and effectively, nobody.

The conflict in the movie focused on Joe’s “childish” intention to beat-up the bully, and his more “adult” capacity to merely intimidate him. Joe was successful in achieving this measure of “adulthood,” but many of his colleagues were disappointed that there was no physical fight. This is considered a typical adult male struggle that correlates with the masculinity conflicts evident among the boys who killed and the “preps and jocks” that provoked them. Such common struggles in the adult world help explain why young boys might choose to use violence to prove their manhood. Both aspects of the adult male conflict depicted in *Joe Somebody*--to use violence or to intimidate one’s enemies--correspond with the motivations stated by the boys who killed (*Joe Somebody*, 2002).

In a recent commercial for *New York Sports Club* (*New York Sports Club*, 2002), a sexy woman parades in lingerie in front of a man’s window. When the man starts

undressing, the woman, disappointed with his missing muscular physique, closes her curtain. Men are now told that without buying this masculine signifier, there will be no women, no intimacy, and no other masculinity dividends; a message historically reserved for woman is beginning to challenge men as well.

Another method through which these messages are communicated is through video games where men are sometimes depicted shooting other men, often in the service of saving a woman. The important factor emphasized here is that it is this association and glamorization between *masculinity* and *violence and power* that is troublesome, not just in manifestly violent and gruesome media but also throughout culture generally. For young boys, the pressure towards hyper-masculinity becomes equivocal to success itself. The boys who killed had been told effectively that they had failed at being men. They were almost all suicidal (See Appendix), and all desperate to show once and for all that they could meet these impossible standards and emerge as victorious and therefore masculine young men.

Parents

Masculinity is also embedded in basic parenting practices. Almost all of the parents of the boys who killed were considered role models in their communities. "Normal, Church-going, respectful neighbors," were common refrains (See Appendix). These parents were blamed in the media, however, for missing visible warning signs of the imminent shootings. Yet these boys spoke of violence obsessively, wrote school essays about violence, made videos depicting their plans, and told people about their specific intentions (See Appendix: Fainaru, 1998; Dedman, 2000; Blank, "The Kid No

One Noticed;” Adams and Malone, 1998, Egan, “Oregon Student Held;” Egan, “Oregon Freshman Goes to Court;” Wilgoren, “Society of Outcasts;” MSNBC Wire Reports, 1999, Brooke, “Attack at School;” Brooke, “Terror in Littleton: The Details;” therecord.com, 2001; Cabell, 1997; Hutchinson and McCoy, 1999; Shore, 1999, Belluck and Wilgoren, 1999). The parents of the boys who killed had generally seen the boys’ weapons and bombs in their bedrooms, but these possessions were considered normal by the parents as well as by the other community members. Hence, the parents of the boys who killed were considered perfectly normal in their communities. It was not just the parents who missed the “warning signs.” The idea that boys and violence are inextricably entwined was shared by the larger community, and worked to prevent all these people from observing cues.

Even though Kipland Kinkel (Oregon 1998) had received his gun as a present from his father, Bill Kinkel, the parents were called “normal parents of teens” (Witmer, “Kip Kinkel’s Parents Were Normal Parents of Teens,” 1998). Denise Witmer insisted this family was *normal* in About.com’s *Parenting of Adolescents*:

Bill and Faith Kinkel were just like any other caring parents of a fifteen year old boy. They were middle class, high family-values types of parents. Bill Kinkel was a member of the tennis club. Faith volunteered with a group that enlist America’s privileged youth to help poor children in Brazil (Ibid.).

That membership in a tennis club or that middle-class status is proof of good parenting is a revealing barometer. Suburban signifiers were used consistently to hide the common violence sensed in the community, but ultimately unrecognized. The suburban communities defended the parents blamed in the media, and blamed instead, the boys

themselves, further isolating the individual at fault, and absolving themselves of missing the same clues. Such a cloak shields underlying distorted values, prevents observation of “warning signs,” and paves the way to blame “bad seeds” independent even of their *normal* family. These comments reveal that people in these communities consider high economic status, white race, and traditionally gender-compliant roles, as indicative of a “normal, healthy, family.” Race is implied in the reference to tennis, a historically white, wealthy, sport. (At Hampshire College in 1986, students organized to prevent the building of a community tennis club on campus because they said it would undermine the school’s non-conformist culture in favor of the white-upper class image that the Hampshire College administration seemed to be trying to achieve).

These boys’ violent fantasies were displayed visibly in front of their parents, school faculty and neighbors, and caused no alarm. People in these communities seemed to consider it normal for boys to be obsessed with violence and weapons and want to use them. The same obsessions in inner cities, however, are considered indicative of a criminal, deviant, and hopeless “culture of poverty.”

Harris and Klebold’s parents (Colorado 1999) were also considered good, normal, upstanding neighbors and citizens. Eric Harris had many pipe bombs in the two-car garage. His father found one of the pipe bombs. His father also answered a call from a gun store about clips Harris had ordered. Eric’s father told the caller that he hadn’t ordered any clips. Eric addressed this interaction in a video he and Klebold made before their crime: “If either one had asked just one question, we would’ve been fucked,” Harris said. “We wouldn’t be able to do what we’re going to do,” Klebold adds on the tape (Gibbs and Roche, 1999). Harris and Klebold seemed to be enraged partly because the

authorities in their life were so uninvolved and out of touch with the boys' needs and concerns. In spite of the boys' meticulous planning, adults and peers alike remained unaware of their anger, and their struggles against daily harassment and abuse. To most people, their violent proclivities seemed like *normal* male tendencies, and the practice of bullying, *normal* male rites of passage.

The school was just as oblivious as the parents. In Creative Writing Class, Harris and Klebold (Colorado 1999) wrote "stuff about killing students and teachers, and blowing-up the classroom," reported classmate Rebecca Heinin (Belluck and Wilgoren, 1999). Klebold wrote a research paper admiring Charles Manson (Ibid.). Consistent reports mentioned that Harris and Klebold were obsessed with Nazi history, shouted "Heil Hitler" periodically, and wore clothes decorated with swastikas. Their massacre was purposely executed on April 20 for Hitler's 110th birthday (Johnson and Wilgoren, 1999). Why didn't the glamorization of Hitler cause their teachers, parents, or other peers, concern? Perhaps anti-Semitism also endured as a *normal* attitude in the suburbs.

The police had been told about Harris' homicidal rages on his website, but they didn't act on it. A neighbor reported that Harris had threatened their son's life, but the police did nothing. Harris once broke the car windshield of his classmate, Brooks Brown. Brooks' father, Randall Brown, complained about this to the Jefferson County Sheriff's Department and added that Harris was assembling and exploding bombs in the neighborhood, and had threatened his son's life. Ms. Brown reported that nothing was done (Brooke, "Attack at School Planned A Year, Authorities Say," 1999). "Boys being boys," was the *common sense* explanation.

It is also noteworthy that out of eight high-profile school shootings between 1996 and 2001, two of the boys killed their own parents (Oregon 1998 and Mississippi 1997), and four killed school officials (Washington 1996, Alaska 1997, Arkansas 1998, and Colorado 1999). Two tried to blow-up the school itself (Oregon 1998, Colorado 1999). The rage and alienation the boys' felt was directed at their peers, and their schools, not just parents, but often including them. Yet schools and teachers have somehow escaped the blame that parents have incurred. Furthermore, Klebold and Harris (Colorado 1999) faulted other people's parents as well as teachers, but absolved their own parents of any culpability. On their last videotape, before the shooting, Harris said about his parents: "They're going to be put through hell once we do this," and then as if talking directly to them: "There's nothing you guys could do about this." Klebold said his parents had been "great parents" and he appreciated them for teaching him "self-awareness, self-reliance." "I'm sorry I have so much rage," he said (Gibbs and Roche, 1999). Carneal (Kentucky 1997) also seemed to relish the punishment he was inflicting on his peers' parents, rather than his own parents. Without even mentioning his own parents, Carneal said of the other kids, "I bet their parents didn't know when they got up... that day they weren't going to see their kids again," he said (Adams, "Teen-ager's ever-changing stories frustrated police," 1998). The boys who killed seemed to be angry that their peers' parents didn't prevent their children from being so abusive. Again, Harris' note in his room:

Your children who have ridiculed me, who have chosen not to accept me, who have treated me like I am not worth their time are dead...I may have taken their lives and my own-- but it was your doing. Teachers, parents, LET THIS MASSACRE BE ON YOUR SHOULDERS UNTIL THE DAY YOU DIE (emphasis in original, Harris 1999).

While many of the boys who killed did not blame their parents, other kinds of family issues emerged linking the school shootings with challenges to masculinity. Five of the eight boys who killed had successful older siblings or other relatives that seemed to compound their sense of impotence. Woodham (Mississippi 1997) had a 24-year old brother that Woodham said, “used to pick on me, beat on me, when I was little” (Cloud, 1998, “Of Arms and The Boy”). Carneal (Kentucky 1997) said he hated being compared to his over-achieving sister at Heath High School (Time Wire Reports, 1997). Even after Carneal’s shooting, his sister waxed poetic, describing the scene to reporters with sophistication and poise. “People were jumping to the floor and it was like a flower folding away, and Michael was just standing there, gun in hand” (Adams, “Carneal’s Holiday Weekend Before Shootings ‘Very Typical,’” 1998). Carneal described his feelings about his sister as well as his frustration with athletic masculinity pressures in an English essay one day. Immediately he apologized for being a boy who doesn’t like sports:

My name is Michael Carneal. Not to offend you but I really hate sports. I have low self-esteem and I play guitar. I have a wide variety of friends, and I like to run. I have an overachieving sister whom (sic) is a senior. I hate being compared to her (Adams, “Carneal Bared His Alienation,” 1998).

Kipland Kinkel (Oregon 1998) also had an older sister who “excelled at everything,” he said. This and his feeling that he couldn’t live up to his parents’ expectations, he said, contributed to his final explosion (Bernstein, “Kinkel’s Boyhood Troubles Explode in Rage, Destruction,” 1998). Kipland’s sister was an excellent student, and a popular cheerleader. Like her parents, she planned to be an ESL teacher

(Ibid.). Kipland seemed to feel that his inadequacies were somehow magnified in contrast to his sister's and parents' accomplishments (Ibid.).

Eric Harris' (Colorado 1999) brother Kevin was a typical "jock" at Columbine High School. He had worked-out with weights to develop his physique, he wore a varsity leather jacket, and he played on the football team. Eric would often visit Kevin when he played in football games at his university in Boulder. Eric, who was described generally as gawky, complained to co-workers that he wasn't as tall as his brother. The sibling rivalry between them was palpable, and probably another source of masculinity shame for Eric (Belluck and Wilgoren, 1999).

Many young children report being abused, taunted, and/or compared unfairly to older siblings or other peers. These boys *normal*, *common* and often upsetting experiences with their siblings combined with a masculinity perceived culturally as impotent seems to have contributed to their rage. This research seeks to expose how *common* difficulties combine lethally today with hyper-masculinity expectations. Furthermore, my thesis is not that all boys who experience such taunting are likely to commit school shootings. My work shows instead that school shootings are one of the most horrific manifestations of the imposition of contemporary masculinity expectations interacting with common social institutions advocating these gender divisions. Many children will have a myriad of other reactions. Nonetheless, as long as school shootings are one of the symptoms, destructive masculinity socialization must be interrogated and transformed; the result will help all young people, not just those driven to massacre.

After reviewing parent, community, and society complicity in socializing boys to be violent, violent masculinity communicated in media, and associations between guns,

masculinity, and violence, it is remarkable that an individual can be blamed as the sole evil culprit, independent of these complex and powerful social forces.

Evil

Looking closely at associations with evil, *normal* male socialization emerges as its character portrait. To the extent that “evil” is a derivative of Satan, this image historically references “greed, lust, and anger” (Pagels, 1976, xvii). Many other writers on masculinity note that *anger* is one of the few emotions boys are socially sanctioned to express (Pollack, 1998; WNPR, Re: Pope, 1999 Garbarino, 2000; etc.). In fact, boys are made to feel evil if they express any other emotion, a sphere associated exclusively with femininity. Thus, to be a *common* male is to be *angry*, and to personify a significant aspect of Satan.

Lust is considered a sign of masculine virility. A strong sex drive is often considered a necessary component for the “red-blooded American male.” Pollack argues that the pressure for men to act like they are only interested in sex becomes a social dictum denying them the intimacy they actually crave (Pollack, 1998). *Lust* as a masculine signifier composes a second aspect of Satan.

Finally, *greed* has come to be seen in the corporate world as another masculine signifier of success. According to Connell, successful businessmen are prototypes of hegemonic men. The drive to satisfy greed economically has become one of the most respected traits in the capitalist developed world. In the *Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (1930), Max Weber explains that money as a reward for hard work originated in the Christian Protestant ethic as a parallel to heaven for leading an ascetic

life. *Greed*, in capitalist society, is perceived as almost necessary for masculine success, and even ethical character, and yet, it is also the third aspect of Satan.

Thus the most famous representation of evil, Satan, is the personification of hegemonic masculinity, the masculine traits the boys who killed were struggling to finally manifest when they committed their crimes. Thus, their efforts to associate themselves with Satan may be a component of their desire to fulfill *normal* masculine expectations. Their interests in this character must be implicated in a society that demands these Satanic qualities from men.

Hegemonic masculinity entails violence, winning, and domination. When the boys who killed started shooting their classmates, on one level they may have thought they were finally demonstrating social expectations of male prowess. Rather than believing their actions were evil, (or in addition to thinking they were evil), they seemed convinced that they had finally done something good, something masculine. They used masculine violence to beat the “preps and jocks” and they expressed their anger, the one emotion considered appropriate for men. Most of the boys who killed said they felt more respected and proud after committing these acts (See Appendix). When these boys used violence they were acting on one continuum of *normal* masculinity expectations.

“Murder is gutsy and daring” (Holland, 1997), announced Woodham, (Mississippi 1997). Michael Carneal (Kentucky 1997) said he brought the guns to school because he was “trying to get people to like him. I showed them to them, and they were still ignoring me. I just wanted the guys to think I was cool” (Blank, “The Kid No One Noticed,” 1999). After the incident, Carneal said he expected: “Everyone would be calling me and they would come over to my house or I would go to their house. I would

be popular. I didn't think I would get in trouble...I was feeling proud, strong, good, and more respected."(Ibid.). Carneal said he brought the bundle of guns to school and when the prayer circle was ending, he announced that he had guns in his blanket. He waited for the adulation to follow. The boys around him apparently talked about the guns briefly, but then changed the subject to CDs. It was then that Carneal fired the guns at the prayer group. Carneal explained later, "I don't know why I wasn't bluffing this time. I guess it was because they ignored me. I had guns, I brought them to school, I showed them to them, and they were still ignoring me" (Ibid.). That Carneal flaunted a masculine signifier, guns, and still could not win symbolic masculinity power, became the final trigger leading him to use guns, and up that ante. For these boys, firing guns was immediate masculine gratification, an easy way to even the score in one lethal swoop. "One second I was some kind of heartbroken idiot," explained Woodham. "and the next second I had the power over many things" (Popyk, "I knew it wouldn't be right," 1998). Using guns and killing wasn't perceived as "evil," it was considered *masculine*.

In another high-profile case where three boys age fifteen, sixteen and seventeen were accused of molesting and killing three eight-year old boys in West Memphis, Arkansas, Damion Echols, one of the accused, expressed an understanding of this kind of pride on the courtroom stand. When asked how he thought the killers might have felt after the deed, he said: "It probably made them feel good, made them feel power, made them happy." He said it was *common sense* that a person who would commit this kind of act would feel good, a remark that gave the prosecuting attorney pause. "It's common sense that killing three eight-year olds would make you feel good?" the prosecutor asked suspiciously (*Paradise Lost*, 1993). Irrespective of Echols's actual guilt, it is important to

understand what makes so many boys from outsider groups empathize with this perspective, and to perceive violence as a means towards happiness, *common sense*.

No Explanation

We have seen how socialized masculinity expectations became part and parcel of what is commonly considered evil. By contrast, the *No Explanation* thesis works to hide the destructive effect of masculinity pressures by ignoring and devaluing the consistent patterns among the cases. Another problem with the *No Explanation* thesis is that, like the other popular explanations, the denial conveys that the boys had no rationale. Such thinking ignores the boys' own explanations for their crimes. Rather than trying to transform the culture with which these boys said they were tormented, the single-issue targets imply that the individual boy had little to do with the shooting. Instead these arguments imply that the boy was either inexplicably crazy or evil, brainwashed by violence in the media, seduced by gun accessibility, or that their parents were completely at fault. These explanations imply that the boys had no self-determination, and no specific grievance. Such accusations are still made when each boy loud and clear articulated the same explanation for their crime. Their own rationales were ignored or trivialized, and they were again demeaned by the culture they seemed to be trying to address. Single-issue explanations prevent any effective response to their concerns.

Eight separate cases of boys shooting at girls and/or boys who called them homosexual, as well as a spate of similar incidents (Pennsylvania 1998, Tennessee 1998, Georgia 1999, California 2001) demands an explanation. The question is how, in the midst of these starkly visible patterns, do people proclaim that there is no pattern or

trend? It is in this very lack of recognition that the machinery of insidious masculinity expectations, lurk.

Douglas T. Shapiro's astute letter to the *New York Times* after Arkansas 1998 clarifies this point further.

Is it a coincidence that all five victims killed by a "random" spraying of bullets were female? It is chilling to think that the threats that preceded these murders were ignored because we believe it is perfectly normal for adolescent boys to hate girls and want to kill them. When will we learn that "boys being boys" is a pathetic excuse for ignoring deeply misogynist tendencies? (Shapiro, 1999).

Shapiro reflects on Arkansas (1998), in a way directly applicable to eight school shootings where boys said they were motivated to kill after a rejection by a girl. (Mississippi 1997, Kentucky 1997, Arkansas 1998, Tennessee 1998, Georgia 1999, California 2001, and New York 2002/See Appendix). The shooter in Georgia (1999) said he was motivated by a break-up with a girlfriend and the shooter in Tennessee (1998) killed his ex-girlfriend's current boyfriend. Recently the shooter in Martin Luther King Jr. High School in New York City (2002) also killed because of a dispute over a girlfriend (Hartocollis, 2002).

Both before and after his school shooting in Arkansas 1998, Mitchell Johnson made it clear that his shooting was motivated when 11-year old Candace Porter broke off their relationship. Newspapers printed across the country Johnson's "vow to kill all the girls who had broken-up with him" (CFRA News Talk Radio, "Accused teen sniper's girl dumped him because he was 'trouble,'" 1998). Inexplicably, on August 12, 1998, five months after the crime, his father still repeated that his son still did not offer any

explanation for the shootings (Connor, 1998). This type of denial seems to be operative in the other shootings as well.

Note again some of the words the boys used to explain why they killed:

Michael Carneal, Kentucky 1997: I guess I just got tired of being called a faggot (Blank, "The Kid No One Noticed," 1998).

Luke Woodham, Mississippi 1998: Throughout my life I was ridiculed. Always beaten. Always hated. Can you, society, truly blame me for what I do? (*New York Times*, "Teenagers Charged With Plotting to Kill in Satanic Campaign," 1997).

Eric Harris, Colorado 1999: Your children who have ridiculed me, who have chosen not to accept me, who have treated me like I am not worth their time are dead....I may have taken their lives and my own- but it was your doing. Teachers, parents, LET THIS MASSACRE BE ON YOUR SHOULDERS UNTIL THE DAY YOU DIE (MSNBC Wire Reports, "Note from Gunmen warns of more violence to come," 1999).

It is because masculinity expectations are such a central component of the social fabric of our culture that these patterns and the boys' clear messages can go undetected. School shootings are only one manifestation of the unrealistic expectations with which boys contend. Being teased and tormented by larger boys has become a "normal" experience for many smaller boys. Some boys may become depressed, others may get into fights, and others may "act out" in class. There are many different reactions to these unreasonable pressures on young boys. School shootings are the most horrific, and consequently have brought this problem to the forefront of social consciousness. In the "no explanation" reaction, opportunities are lost to help all young boys who face such harassment, not just victims of school shootings.

This *common sense*--that boys like violence and weapons, hate girls and anything associated with femininity, and that they will bully other boys who appear feminine--needs to be examined. It is these previously invisible social conditions that must be exposed and transformed. Then it will be possible to move beyond the "no explanation," as well as the other superficial responses to these crimes, and to finally address comprehensively the killing of young children in school massacres.

Before delving further into the implications of unattainable masculinity expectations in relationship to these crimes, chapter three introduces the larger theoretical framework through which issues relating to gender are highlighted. All the boys who killed were members of outsider groups (See Appendix). They tended to be harassed by the "preps and jocks" who represented the power and prestige in their schools, and who received the respect of their peers, teachers, and other authorities in their communities (See Appendix).

How were these social hierarchies maintained? What structures in the boys' schools, communities, and in the larger culture, operated to sustain this form of social system? The common understanding is that certain boys, displaying typical masculinity traits are superior to others with more "feminine" qualities. Specific forms of violence--fraternity hazing, sports fights between teammates, and between the fathers of these boys, and what comes to be considered "normal adolescent bullying"--is made invisible because they are considered *normal* aspects of daily life. These experiences were part of the *common sense* considered distinctly different from the *real* violence in the inner cities.

Then in chapter four, the social construction of masculinity is analyzed in relationship to these frameworks, and the more insidious aspects of this gender performance are revealed. Homophobia, misogyny, and violence materialize as endemic to expressing masculinity prowess. The boys who killed--desperate to prove their masculinity against relentless humiliation--seemed driven by traditional notions of masculinity to demonstrate their own affiliation with these social expectations. Within a cultural context that denies the everyday violence in their lives, and pressured by unattainable gender expectations encouraging them to fight to attain a stalwart masculinity identity, picking up guns became *common sense*.

CHAPTER THREE: STATUS-HIERARCHIES

Foucault writes:

Despair and time eat away the bonds of iron and steel, but they are powerless against the habitual union of ideas, they can only tighten it still more; and on the soft fibres of the brain is founded the unshakeable base of the soundest of Empires (Foucault, 1995, 102-103).

The boys who killed were contained in multiple ways. In addition to the daily physical and emotional torment they suffered at the hands of “jocks and preps,” they were enmeshed in a social fabric that sanctioned the idea that “skinny” or “chubby” or “little” boys were less important than those who were stronger, bigger or more athletic. The status-hierarchies in their schools were maintained not just by their popular peers and the adult authorities, but also through the “common sense” pervasive in the environment, designating them as inferior.

To rebel against both their low status on the social ladder, and the cultural norms that maintained them there, the boys who killed seemed to try to become all-powerful if only for one moment of their lives by destroying the current rulers in their school, and by turning to alternative ideological structures, ideas that might rationalize a different social order where they could finally dominate. Against the seemingly intransigent caste-like system they endured, these boys looked for a reversal, a mirror that reflected the opposite image, the other side of the binary predicament. In the end, however, they remained constructed in both a literal and figurative prison. As Foucault writes in his *Power/Knowledge* essays (1977), confronting one power with an opposing force merely reincarnates the initial power in a different form. For significant cultural transformation,

Foucault advocates exposing the many micro-power mechanisms pervasive in society. By making insidious cultural norms visible, a cultural transformation can take place. The boys who killed, however, struggled helplessly in the same binary paradigm. They fought the “preps and jocks” with the same tools of socialized violent masculinity that they were themselves oppressed by.

This chapter explores how the boys who killed battled their school’s status-hierarchies, and the cultural hegemony confirming their low status. They turned to alternative ideologies in an effort to reverse their positions on the low end of the social order, but they ultimately remained in the binary structure they still accepted, and thus limited their potential for escape.

Violence or Power

The boys who killed used violence to achieve power. The boys that survived said they felt more powerful after their crimes. Yet in the end, they were still impotent, now living the rest of their lives behind bars. Like Foucault, Arendt (1970) makes a clear discrepancy between violence and power. Violence, she says, is distinct from power in that violence necessitates implements (Ibid. 4). Power is dependent on consent. The boys who killed may well have confused these terms. Arendt writes that Mao Tse-tung’s famous adage: “Power grows out of the barrel of a gun,” is misguided (Ibid. 5). “It is the people’s support that lends power to the institutions of a country,” she writes. “All political institutions are manifestations and materializations of power; they petrify and decay as soon as the living power of the people ceases to uphold them” (Ibid. 41). The strength of government, or in the cases of the boys who killed, the *tyranny of hyper-*

masculinity became a cultural hegemony maintained through the consent of their peers, their teachers, their parents, and the larger society. Even if they could dominate through violence on one horrific day, they did not have the social support for an alternative view.

The boys who killed momentarily withdrew their consent. By picking-up guns, they essentially declared that they would no longer acquiesce to this status-hierarchy. Instead of being perpetually dominated, the social representations of a failed masculinity, they became temporarily feared and powerful. With guns, they could command fleeting obedience. They could tyrannize, an ephemeral signifier of hyper-masculinity.

They could not command lasting power, however. While those that survived said they felt “more powerful” after they committed their crimes, the power structures in their schools did not change. The reactive violence of the boys who killed yielded no power partly because they were stuck in the tactics and ideology they were trying to oppose; and unlike the legitimated abuse of smaller boys that the hegemony of masculine athletic prowess afforded the “preps and jocks,” these boys had no cultural support for their drive for power. They could try to destroy the physical structure of the *Empire* (school), as Foucault describes, as well as the current rulers of that *Empire* (preps/jocks/teachers/parents), but the school/community/culture was still structured according to the ideological foundation of this *Empire*’s rules (hyper-masculinity cultural hegemony).

Picking up guns was a way to destroy the enemy, but it was not a means for becoming powerful. Montesquieu wrote: “tyranny is the most violent and least powerful of all forms of government” (Ibid. 41). Arendt expands this as: “Power always stands in

need of numbers, violence can manage without them, it relies on implements” (Ibid.

42). The boys who killed had implements but they did not have numbers. In each school shooting, they were members of small outsider groups (See Appendix). Not only were they a minority in their communities, they were also considered outcasts; they did not have social influence or power.

“To remain in authority requires respect for the person or office,” Arendt writes. The “preps and jocks” momentarily lost this position when the boys who killed withdrew their respect, and their consent at being dominated. The boys who killed never had this respect, and by acting so violently, they became criminals, even more extreme outsiders, losing their right to participate in this culture at all. Their tactics in the end were as impotent as their previous efforts to function, where in spite of being white and generally, upper-middle class, they were treated as pariahs among this elite.

Arendt writes that violence is precisely the instrument that prevents the acquisition of power. “Who has ever doubted that the violated dream of violence,” she writes, “that the oppressed ‘dream at least once a day of setting themselves up in the oppressor’s place’... the persecuted of exchanging the role of ‘the role of the quarry for that of the hunter,’ and the last of the kingdom where ‘the last shall be first, and the first last’” (Ibid. 21)? The sentiment is understandable, she writes, but using violence destroys the possibility of realizing these goals. “The substance of violent action is ruled by the means-ends category whose chief characteristic, if applied to human affairs, has always been that the end is in danger of being overwhelmed by the means which it justifies and which are needed to reach it” (Ibid. 4).

Within this context, the boys who killed flailed against the cultural agencies of masculinity and domination using the same machinery of masculinity and domination. A doomed strategy, they wound up dead or in jail for life, and the status quo prevailed. Nonetheless, these concerns are as valid as their tactics were horrific. While violence may not transform cultural consciousness, understanding and exposing how these ideological structures are employed and perpetuated, may.

Outsiders

All the boys who killed were part of outsider groups in their schools. In addition to the lower status they were accorded, each of them identified themselves as "Other." The alternative social circles for the most part did not have a positive identity; instead, they had names referencing the negation. Such signifiers--including *freaks*, *geeks*, *nerds* or *gay*--specifically connote abnormality, excess, or an opposite to the mainstream (i.e. feminine). From this position of difference, both externally imposed, and ultimately internally accepted, the boys who killed, like everyone else, strived to develop identities that mattered. Exiled, they sought power in outsider groups. Whether they came to reject the mainstream, or they were expelled involuntarily, or some combination, the boys worked hard to create a powerful outsider community.

One boy who perceived himself as a member of the Goth crowd in Los Angeles reports:

We all looked the same in kindergarten. Not Goth, but we were all made fun of. As we started to get older, we started materializing into what they were saying to us. We made ourselves come off as different. The group of friends that always got made fun of became the Goth group, the outcasts (Goldberg, 1999: A13).

Many of the boys who killed had this experience their whole lives. Always excluded, always picked-on, it was hard to imagine that life could be much different. Being excluded from the mainstream created the impetus for an oppositional culture that valued the qualities demeaned by the exalted cliques. The outsider groups became mirror images, celebrating the only choice that seemed available, the other side of the binary.

Jonah Blank, writing for Online U.S. News, described Michael Carneal (Kentucky 1997) as “insecure, self-centered, and hungry for attention...On Heath High’s social ladder, he was barely clinging to the lower rungs” (Blank, 1998). Carneal was also part of a Goth group considered strange by many of the school faculty. One school employee at Heath High School referred to Carneal’s friends as “the black group” because of their clothes. Another teacher referred to them as “the zoo crew” because “they seemed so weird.” That even the teachers seemed to marginalize Carneal may have contributed to his rage and self-esteem problems (Time Wire Reports, “No Plot Found In High School Slayings,” 1997).

Carneal (Kentucky, 1997), Harris and Klebold (Colorado 1999), and Kinkel (Oregon 1998) were all said to dress Gothic-style in long black trench coats (Johnson and Golden in Arkansas 1998 wore camouflage)(See Appendix). This further differentiated them from other students. They seemed to embrace what was missing in mainstream culture, appearing to affect an opposite identity that had some meaning of its own. If the “preps and jocks” wore conventional clothes, theirs’ would be *strange*.

The Gothic culture often includes playing violent video games like *Doom* and *Quake*, and listening to the music of Marilyn Manson (Adams and Malone, 1999). The music promotes Satan as an alternative to the mainstream Church. Ali Onta, director of publicity for Cleopatra Records, the nation’s largest Goth label in Los Angeles, describes

Goth as "very depressing kill-yourself music" (Purdam, 1999), perhaps an indication of how bad these boys were feeling.

Manson became a projection for teenage alienation; many teenagers who feel they are different from the mainstream tend to feel depressed and weird. Manson became an icon personifying this difference for popular consumption, reflecting the related rage, and providing another consumer option. Corporate executives using "Cool Hunters" (as Rifkin earlier explained) probably created Manson, recognizing an exploitable economic opportunity. Wealthy white boys excluded from the mainstream tend to have discretionary funds they may want to use to try soothe their emptiness and despair. Instead of valuing difference of multiple forms, the children in these schools could choose essentially between Tommy Hilfiger and pop music, the mainstream choice, or Goth and Manson-type commodities of resistance. These choices also encouraged the purchasing of other accessories associated with each of these consumer options.

Many social critics blamed this music and subculture attire as motivation for the crimes. In the eighties teen suicide, culminating in the successful suicide pact of four youth in Bergenfield, New Jersey was blamed on AC/DC. In the nineties, the target of blame for these horrific homicides was Manson (Gaines, 1998). These music choices did not necessarily develop from seeds of teenage rebellion nurtured in grassroots movements; these were likely corporate packages designed to address the other side of a historically binary culture dependent on one or another manifestation of cultural expression.

In the sixties, the hippie culture of resistance and difference was harder for corporations to co-opt. The values of this youth focused on anti-materialism, and

political revolution engaging the ideas of Karl Marx, Franz Fanon, and contemporary revolutionaries such as the Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr. and Malcolm X. These values were not as easily commodified. Young people were trying to change social institutions and values, stop the war in Viet Nam, and literally create more love and peace in the face of violence and social hierarchies. The attire of this generation was not expensive. In the name of anti-materialism, clothes were “cooler” the more old, torn, used, or even non-existent they were; nudity and free love became crucial components of this cultural resistance. It took corporate creativity longer to find ways to exploit this cultural expression; finally, sixties resistance was packaged, culminating in the expensive cooptation of designer “torn jeans,” and appropriating the “bohemian” look in expensive boutiques (Fiske, 1991).

Then for various reasons, this culture gave way to the late seventies, early eighties punk movement, a resistance founded more on resignation, than revolution. Punks explained that in their green spiked hair, and sharp metal spikes, they personified the anomie of a mechanistic culture that created youth zombies. Punks in America were not part of a collective, as the sixties generation. They were angry individuals, apolitically anarchistic, and passive, if not hungry for consumer participation in this alternative, relatively expensive fashion. They donned leather jackets, leather boots, dyed hair, and heavy chains.

It was this culture that morphed into the nineties teen culture--Manson, Doom and Quake--another angry, nihilistic, form of resistance. Those that did not accept or become accepted by the more popular side of the binary culture had this *other* option. Corporate efforts to capitalize on both sides of this binary have only become more creative and

effective in nurturing such divisions, and appropriating icons of resistance. In the same way as contemporary laissez-faire-type capitalism reaps the benefits of the binary choice between absolute masculinity and absolute femininity, and the expensive lure of maintaining these impossible extremes (make-up, muscle-building supplements), money is made from creating other false dichotomies, including the teen culture of “preps and jocks”(masculinity personified), and the “Other,” materializing in an opposite commodity form.

Capitalist culture depends on insatiable desire. Extreme gender polarities are impossible to attain because people are necessarily more complicated; both men and women have typically “masculine,” and “feminine” qualities. Through advertising the ideal man or woman-- attained only by purchasing specific accessories--cultural norms are created and propelled by the profit-motive; people are persuaded to constantly try to achieve these impossible extremes. It is impossible, however, to become completely masculine or entirely feminine. Buying accoutrements that will finally accomplish this goal is a hopeless prospect, and yet, the economic system is structured around such objectives. If people feel alienated or incomplete--they will use their money to buy the products advertised to fulfill them. If people actually attained satisfaction they would no longer *buy*, and contemporary laissez-faire-type would collapse.

Since the 1980's *Reaganomics*, laissez-faire capitalist surge, containment on monopolies and other economic and social forces pushing this kind of purchasing frenzy have decreased. Economic policies curtailing monopoly have been diminished, and social programs supporting people without resources have been cut. There are few limits

on corporate influence. Durkheim describes the foundation of anomic suicide as predicated on the concept that:

Unlimited desires are insatiable by definition and insatiability is rightly considered a sign of morbidity. Being unlimited, they constantly and infinitely surpass the means at their command; they cannot be quenched (1951, 247).

Durkheim's precondition for anomic suicide describes the present today. This thesis articulates the present state of unattainable masculinity expectations, and the impact of these pressures on the boys who killed who seemed to try desperately to achieve them. Durkheim writes further regarding conditions fertile for anomic suicide: "economic progress has mainly consisted in freeing industrial relations from all regulation" (Ibid. 254). The influence of religion has decreased, and occupational groups have been less influential in trying to "regulate salaries, the price of products, and production itself." Again, these specific types of economic realities have escalated considerably since the Reaganomics of the 1980's. Durkheim writes: "Ultimately, this liberation of desires has been made worse by the very development of industry and the almost infinite extension of the market" (Ibid. 255). Without economic restraints corporate influences capitalize on alienation and desire with the sole purpose of maximizing profits. Community values and concerns become increasingly irrelevant.

In this context, the Manson model of resistance becomes another unattainable, and seductive goal for alienated youth to try to buy/achieve. Those youth who are excluded from the mainstream culture and its affiliated power and signifiers buy/admire the other choice: icons representing social upheaval, glamorizing what is demeaned in

mainstream culture. Then, the lack of sufficient external regulations to restrain capitalist-created passions becomes part of the basis for widespread anomie.

Marilyn Manson is a skinny, “weird” looking pop star who wears skirts and make-up. As a popular image, he becomes a signifier of phallic power specifically aimed at young boys who are not “preps and jocks,” youth who are also skinny or weird, and perhaps considered “feminine.” Manson turned these “defects” in American culture--the “evil” side of the binary-- instead, into representations of an alternative power, championing an otherwise discarded “femininity.” In such a social reversal, those boys left out of the mainstream for being “skinny” or “feminine” have the opportunity to buy alternative products allowing them too to feel central and powerful.

Manson has been one of the media targets blamed for school shootings. He was forced to cancel his concert tour after Columbine (Colorado 1999) (Sterngold, 1999). Of course, most young people who participate in this alternative Goth culture--listen to this music, and wear the attire related to such popular icons--do not kill. Many young people who listen to Manson do, however, relate to the rage and nihilism with which he is associated. These pervasive feelings of alienation are crucial for understanding the spate of school shootings and copy-cat efforts across the nation. In what form these experiences become commodities (Manson, AC/DC) is less significant.

As outsiders, many of the boys who killed seemed to target people or representatives of the mainstream groups they felt excluded from. The harassment inflicted by the “jocks and preps” on the boys who killed was a part of everyday life in the schools according to many students. The hierarchy was maintained through the daily belittling of the outsiders. A senior, Jeni LaPlante, said that at Columbine High School it

was “big jocks picking on little jocks, or big jocks picking on you know, skaters”

(*New York Times*, “Terror in Littleton; The Community; Columbine Students Talk of Disaster and Life,” 1999). The people who did the teasing were “football players mostly,” said Varsity Wrestler, Dustin Thurman (*Ibid.*).

Meg Hains, a junior, said that when she was around students who weren’t accepted in Columbine, she would lose social status too. “Friends who normally just come up to me and talk to me and are so nice to me--when I’m around him (Harris, Klebold, and others), they give me looks. And people come up to me after I talk to him they’re like, “How can you talk to him? How can you acknowledge his presence?” (*Ibid.*). Devon Adams agreed: “Whether they (Klebold and Harris) were wearing jeans and a T-shirt, or whether they were wearing their black trench coats, people would give them looks. Just like, ‘You don’t belong here, would you leave?’” (*Ibid.*). To add injury, Harris and Klebold were apparently considered outsiders even in the outsider group, The Trench Coat Mafia (Cullen, “Outsiders Even Among the Outsiders,” 1999).

The boys who killed appeared to shoot at specific students they said had mistreated them in addition to some seemingly indiscriminate shooting. They aimed at girls who rejected them, the boys who teased them, and people they saw as cultural representatives of the society they believed had wronged them: those affiliated with the Church, those who were successful in the school hierarchy, and those they thought should have protected them.

Then there were specific victims: In Colorado 1999: Lauren Townsend (age 18), was the captain of the girls’ varsity volleyball team; Cassie Bernall (age 17), became a born-again Christian two years earlier (Sebastian, 1999); Rachel Scott (age 17), was

active in Celebration Christian Fellowship Church; Mathew Ketcher (age 16), played offensive and defensive lines and hoped to start for the football team; Isaiah Shoels (age 18), played football and wrestled, (Shoels was also the only African-American). Even the teacher who was killed, David Sanders (age 47), coached girls' basketball and softball (Conason, 1999).

Carneal (Kentucky 1997) specifically fired into a prayer group in the hallway of his school. He killed Jessica James (age 17), Kayce Steger (age 15), and Nicole Hadley (age 14)--all members of the prayer group. Carneal told Amanda Jones (age 15) his plans prior to the incident. He had dated her previously and she said that he told her "he was going to bring a gun to school and that he thought people in the daily prayer group were hypocrites" (Adams, "Teen-ager's ever-changing stories frustrated police," 1998). He also told her: "that the hypocrites were going to go down, 'cause he was going to bring 'em down." He told her December 1 would be "the day of reckoning" (Ibid.).

That Carneal (Kentucky 1997) specifically fired at the school prayer group, at girls who were practicing Christians and whom he referred to as hypocrites, and even that he used the religious term, "reckoning" indicates some sense that Carneal felt angry at Christian representatives in his communities. Perhaps he expected Church followers who implicitly claimed to be better, to refrain from teasing him, protect him from the harassment, or to just treat him more respectfully. By calling the day of his school shooting, "the day of reckoning," Carneal seem to try to reverse who was *bad* in the final analysis. He seemed to feel that while he was seen as evil in his school, it was these other students who should be considered bad in the end.

Class or Status-power

Typically, school violence is considered the unfortunate province of urban economically disadvantaged communities. The term *culture of poverty* refers to the view that “lower-class people form a separate culture with their own values and norms, which are sometimes in conflict with conventional society” (Siegel, 2002, 80). According to Larry J. Siegel, however, author of the textbook *Juvenile Delinquency: The Core* “Feelings of anomie or strain are not typically found in middle- and upper-class communities where education and prestigious occupations are readily obtainable. In lower class areas, however, strain occurs because legitimate avenues for success are closed” (Ibid. 87).

Siegel’s anomie is not the same as the anomie theorized by Durkheim. Durkheim wrote that it is the crisis that aggravates suicide. Either economic depression or growth can have this impact. “Poverty is a restraint in itself,” writes Durkheim (Durkheim, 1951). Poverty is explicitly not considered a factor, Durkheim writes, because it breeds its own expectations given available means. This common misreading of Durkheim contributes to the popular attack on the poor as *deviants* in a “culture of poverty.”

Given this historically accepted precept, still espoused by leading experts in 2002, it is particularly important to explore how perceptions of class relate to the spate of contemporary school shootings taking place in mostly upper-middle class suburban communities. The boys who killed generally came from outsider groups in wealthy suburban schools, teenagers that in these communities came to be seen as separate cultures in the same way that impoverished communities are sometimes perceived. The boys who killed were also in the midst of a crisis. They lived in upper-middle class

communities, considered, “good,” but they were treated as failed boys, pariahs. Their means to achieve unattainable masculinity expectations was even smaller than those available to more mainstream boys, also unable to fully meet these expectations. This condition is ripe for anomie.

Slavoj Zizek (1999) writes that in this age of science, moral responsibility is constantly reflected elsewhere. Traditional prohibitions have disintegrated and capitalist culture condones libertarian values with no boundaries. Zizek laments that one of the football players who was convicted for gang-raping a retarded girl in Glen Ridge, New Jersey, went on to Boston College, and then raped a classmate soon after being exonerated at his trial. Just as the boys who killed had too limited means to achieve unattainable masculinity expectations--a depression of means--the “preps and jocks” were given unlimited powers and privilege in their communities to pursue unattainable expectations, a potential prosperity crisis in Durkheim’s model. Zizek recommends a Marxist and psychoanalytical perspective to explain what he calls the “the unexpected consequences of the disintegration of traditional structures that regulated libidinal life” (341).

In *Our Guys*, Bernard Lefkowitz writes about the paucity of social regulations that have become endemic to normal masculinity. The bad behavior on the part of football players who gang raped the young retarded girl in Glen Ridge, New Jersey was founded on their suburban community’s carte blanche support for those “preps and jocks” that endowed their town with prestige through their athletic, (read: masculine) accomplishments. The disdain these boys showed for girls--their daily sexist comments, and behavior in school and out--was tolerated in the service of the power and esteem they

brought to their school, parents, and community. Lefkowitz writes that these boys' actions mirrored the behavior of their fathers, who used their boys to compete with each other. It was the men "whom the boys performed for; it was the men they tried to impress with their competitiveness and aggressiveness and controlled daring" (Lefkowitz, 1997, 75). Lefkowitz writes. It was a traditional upbringing that "had worked for their fathers and grandfathers," and this, together with "almost a religious faith in the redemptive power of athletics, created a brotherhood amidst the "ferocious ignorance" of fathers (Ibid. 63-64). The gang rape took place in front of other guys, football teammates, following expectations to show-off in front of other males, and thus reinforcing masculinity status.

Through this rape, and many other forms of sexual objectification and assault, the "preps and jocks" mimicked the dynamics in their family structure that had been in place for generations. These roles, endemic to patriarchal structures, tend to reinforce the position of male as dominant and exploitative, and to legitimate the role of the female as silent observer and/or object of male aggression. In this context, it is less surprising that in many such communities fathers also end up physically fighting at their son's football matches. In a recent high-profile case, one father killed another father over such a dispute. There are now expensive coaches available to help suburban parents manage their anger relating to their son's sports experiences. Ridgewood, New Jersey, recently became one of many such communities enforcing a *Silent Sunday* where everyone must stay home and recuse themselves from such activities. A familial accusation is embedded in this intervention implying that families need cooling off as opposed to the social and economic mores, values, and expectations needing transformation.

Looking more closely, then, it is also fathers' hegemonic status that operates in the school shootings. As adolescents these boys were still necessarily dependent on their parents, financially and otherwise. Thus, another type of subordination compounds a boy's sense of impotence. "Preps and jocks" as well as "gay nerds" struggle to emulate paternal models of masculinity, practices and images marketed in this economy.

Children may also feel overwhelmed by the accomplishments of their parents. Boys are especially encouraged to surpass their parents economically. When parents are wealthy, this task can seem daunting for young boys. That a child's own accomplishments can be attributed to the money, (that still most likely), their fathers earned, becomes another contributing factor in the struggle to obtain unattainable masculinity expectations. Questions develop for boys regarding their ability to have power/money/masculinity or their "fate" at not needing to work and consequently never producing their own financial/masculinity/power.

The historical precedent to these crimes called in 1924 the "crime of the century" was also attributed to such economic factors when two extremely wealthy teenage boys, Richard Loeb and Nathan Leopold (Chicago 1924) murdered another affluent boy, Robert Franks. Leopold and Loeb were legally defended by the famous Clarence Darrow who argued that their fathers' "wealth unlimited (sic) was a terrible misfortune" that debilitated their sense of self (Davis, 1924).

For Eric Harris (Colorado 1999) one of the last blows to his masculinity occurred when his parents told a Marine recruiter that Eric took Luvox for depression. This disqualified him immediately from his chosen career but his parents wanted him to go to college instead, and their disclosure while potentially well meaning, allowed them to

trump their son's goals and aspirations, in favor of their own (Belluck and Wilgoren, 1999). One of Eric's friends said, "Eric was crushed by the news"(Ibid.). That was the 15th of April, five days before the massacre (Ibid.).

Recall Stein argument earlier regarding the role paternal dynamics might have operated (Stein, 2000). He writes that a competitive sports culture was central to Columbine high school (and many suburban schools) almost as a mirror of the model of winning among parents in corporate business. The boys who killed were considered "geeks" and "losers" by the successful "jocks," and sometimes by the adults in their lives as well, producing the same kind of anxiety men experience in the workplace where they may worry about being fired or having their jobs constantly redefined.

Since these massacres tend to occur in economically wealthy communities, the class divisions that are characteristic of more diverse communities were not manifest features in the hostilities between the adolescents. The hierarchies did seem to have some class references but other symbolic representations of power differences persisted most demonstratively. Where class distinctions were less visible forms of division among suburban students other forms of exclusionary practices and binary categories seem to have been created, imitating these historical hierarchies. Using Weber's understanding of status-power, and Bourdieu's notion of cultural capital, the less obvious, but still class-related affiliations can be examined.

Weber introduces the notion of *status-power* as responsible for modern day divisions between the rich, rather than the "bourgeoisie and proletariat" as Marx describes. Among property owners style of life, fashion, and restrictions on social intercourse, define one faction from another (In Gerth and Mills, 1948, 188-189). In the

schools in which these massacres occurred, male “preps and jocks” were the most celebrated students because they represented mainstream values related to prowess in sports and willingness to strive towards mainstream expectations. These are the students who conform to dress standards, dominate in accepted masculine activities like football, and incorporate dominant materialistic values and consumer practices.

Applied to Weber’s model, “preps and jocks” become something of a higher caste in their school and in such a structure contact with members of the lower caste is seen as a stigma that must be removed almost ritualistically (Ibid.). Weber writes that *pariahs* then tend to form their own communities as a reaction and a defense against this abuse (Ibid.).

These ideas are particularly poignant since all the boys who killed considered themselves pariahs in their school, were picked-on relentlessly by the more popular and generally wealthier “preps and jocks,” and all formed outsider groups with others who seemed to share their fate. Jane Dark cautions in *The Village Voice* that “geek profiling” has become visible where automatic mistrust develops towards anyone who wore a trench coat or black nail polish (Dark, 1999).

Bourdieu describes the “fractions of the middle class” as a war between powerful groups who have “symbolic capital” or prestige in the community, and the dominated who have “cultural capital,” a form of intelligence or scholastic achievement (1994, 339). Like the conditions represented by hegemonic “preps and jocks,” Bourdieu contends that in a bourgeois education, sports are valued over culture.

The dominant class perceives their relation “to the dominated fraction-- ‘intellectuals,’ ‘artists,’ ‘professors’--in terms of the opposition between the male and the

female, the virile and the effeminate..." (Ibid. 344). Today computer "geeks" might be added to this list; people who potentially gain "cultural capital" as a result of their specialized intelligence. Six of the eight boys who killed were considered bright, with above average intelligence and exceptional computer savvy. Their talents were devalued, however, in these athletic-centered communities and instead the young boys were feminized, and referred to as gay.

Suburban schools tend to value sports and devalue intelligence and computer skills, demonstrating a specific relationship to American mythology. The libertarian ideal promises wealth, regardless of initial economic conditions. The myth ignores the huge battles necessary for overcoming poverty. Republicans tend to promote tax cuts and social service reductions on the theory that needy individuals benefit more without government intervention. People who may currently need such government support might vote against tax spending, partly because their incomes are taxed disproportionately, but also to create their own future potential for achieving unlimited wealth. That circumstances might change including winning the lottery is an aspect of the myth underlying the economy.

In the same way, sports in suburban high schools becomes a short cut, a lottery potential, for winning financial scholarships to prestigious colleges and universities. Hard work is a staple of American ethics but short cuts and immediate gratification are competing values and often more powerful determinants for fostering motivation. Computer savvy talents would seem to be a more direct factor in predicting future success than athletic talent but educational institutions tend to consistently reward the latter over the former.

The element of luck is an integral and yet less articulated, aspect of the American dream. Being born to a wealthy family is related to chance, as is having a more “masculine” body or physical prowess. These qualities bestow status and are high indicators of success entirely irrespective of the hard work ethic that is the more manifest value. Support for such a “natural regality” is also part of the invisible undercurrent in contemporary ideology.

That “jocks” then enjoy higher social status than the boys whose talents are more related to computer, “geek-like” activities, may also have been complicated by the success of Bill Gates whose luck and computer savvy made him a multi-billionaire. As economic trends change, and computer expertise is also associated with seemingly magical attributes, the “prep and jock” culture may feel more threatened by this competing arbiter of status. Currently, the status of geeks is trumped by the tradition of “prep and jock” prestige, symbols of both economic status and body capital implicit in the American “luck of the draw.”

Harris and Klebold (Colorado 1999) were good students. Harris was considered one of the smartest students in the class, intelligent and articulate (Egan, “Terror In Littleton: The Reasons” 1999). Harris excelled at school and was also recognized by major video game manufacturers for the computer programs he wrote for Doom and Quake. Klebold, too, was considered bright. The other boys who killed were also generally recognized as the higher achieving students in their class. Barry Loukatais (Washington 1996) was an honor student as was Jacob Davis (Tennessee 1998). Evan Ramsey (Alaska 1997) was considered “extremely bright” and Michael Carneal (Kentucky 1997) was considered a computer hacker and a B average student. He was in

the Advanced English class at his school. Thomas Solomon (Georgia 1999) was teased because he did his homework all the time instead of socializing. Luke Woodham (Mississippi 1997) was also assessed as having a higher than average intelligence. He was immersed in studying Latin and Nietzsche on his own (See Appendix).

Members of the Trench Coat Mafia (Colorado 1999) said they were harassed initially because they were smart, but then it evolved into a generalized disdain, and then constant bullying (LeBlanc, 1999). Devon Adams, a sophomore, who considered Klebold one of his best friends and who was on the forensics team, said that when he went up to the stage as a state champion for the national forensics qualifiers, he was stunned to hear booing in the audience. When he looked over, he noticed it was the football players. "It's really sad that academics are so low on our ranking, because it's something else to be proud of," he said (Mifflin, 1999). Adams added that the "jocks and preps" at Columbine would often give them looks. Thus the boys' interest in computers set them further apart from the popular kids in their more sports-focused communities. According to Bourdieu's analysis, the boys' academic talents or practices relating to the mind as opposed to the body, might contribute to the "jocks" perception of these boys as feminine, and the school's hierarchy of "jocks" dominating "nerds".

In addition to the more subtle class differences relating to Weber and Bourdieu's paradigms, a more traditionally economic analysis is relevant as well. For in fact the "jocks and preps" were often marginally wealthier, or sometimes markedly so compared to the boys who killed.

"Jocks have more money," said Meg Harris, a 16-year-old sophomore at Columbine. "One jock has a Hummer. He totaled one Hummer and his Dad bought him

another” (Rimer, “Terror in Littleton: The School; Good Grades, Good Teams and Some Bad Feelings,” 1999).

New York Times Journalist Adrian LeBlanc reports on the hierarchy of cliques at most suburban schools:

The popular kids tend to be wealthier and the boys among them tend to be jocks. The Gap Girls—Tommy Girls—Polo Girls compose the pool of desirable girlfriends, many of whom are athletes as well. Below the popular kids, in a shifting order of relative unimportance are the druggies (stoner, deadheads, burnouts, hippies or neo-hippies), trendies or Valley Girls, preppies skateboarders and skateboarder chicks, nerds and techies, wigglers, rednecks, and Goths, better known as freaks. There are troublemakers, losers and floaters- kids who move from group to group. Real losers are invisible (LeBlanc, 1999)

The difference between their financial backgrounds, even if seemingly minor, was exacerbated by the way they presented themselves. “Preps and jocks” tend to wear designer clothes that reference upper class. The “Goth” look accentuates the opposite. It conveys an image of being left out of society rather than reveling in privilege. Goth clothes are torn, old, the antithesis of mainstream culture. While the financial situations between these groups may have been minimal in real terms, the gap in representational terms was wide. Then the combination of wealth and athletic prowess became the visible representations of power in the school. In Marx’s words: “The ruling ideas of every age have ever been the ideas of the ruling class.” The “jocks and preps” dressed in a way that emphasized that power and enjoyed the high-status their talents afforded them in this cultural moment.

Luke Woodham (Mississippi 1997) and Evan Ramsey (Alaska 1997) were actually considered poor compared to the students they killed. The other boys who killed came from generally wealthy, suburban homes. Class issues may still have operated,

however. Harris (Colorado 1999) particularly, may have had some economic motivations. Harris' father had entered the oil exploration industry at the time of the boom (late seventies) and was apparently a casualty of the subsequent "bust." Stein writes (2000) that part of Eric's unconscious motivation may have been to restore his father's strength and power.

Even so, while there were subtle economic differences that may have contributed to school power dynamics--that the boys who killed did come from generally wealthy communities added more shock and disbelief in the aftermath of the crimes. "It can't happen here," was the common refrain. This reaction itself may help explain some of the biases embedded in these communities. Socially acceptable violence and exclusionary hierarchies became so commonplace that they are essentially invisible.

Jeffrey Fagan and Deanna L. Wilkinson (1998) write that in urban neighborhoods, violence is generally functional, goal-oriented behavior towards "the establishment and perpetuation of the sense of self and one's personal image in the minds of others (Ibid. 65). Gang violence increases masculinity status, and robbery provides status through the value of stolen goods, as well as by demonstrating the perpetrator's masculine dominance over the victim.

In rural and white communities, status may be acquired through different forms of dominance including physical fights and violent sports, as well as dating assaults, the latter demonstrating "not only one's dominance, but one's masculine identity which is defined via the possession and subordination of women" (Ibid. 63). In both cases, masculinity prowess emerges as a dominant goal in executing violent behavior. Yet studies still focus on this problem as a phenomenon only of inner cities. Considering

violent crime as specific to urban communities serves to deflect attention away from the larger social problem in culture more generally.

Given this, it is less surprising that retaliatory violence against “jocks” takes place in affluent areas. Instead, bewildered reactions suggest that violent prejudice in these communities is tolerated and considered normal, or barely visible. Another example of this is fraternity hazing exposed in wealthy suburban communities as “a largely hidden phenomenon in which high school and college athletes” report that they “let themselves be physically abused or humiliated as a rite of passage” for entry into exclusive sports teams, fraternities or other groups. Recall again that in the last twenty years over 80 people were killed in these rituals, (McFadden, “Eight Wrestlers at High School Are Accused in Hazing,” 2000) but awareness of this tacitly accepted violence is only now beginning to surface. Many families in rural and suburban areas have arsenals of guns allegedly used for hunting, but often fired for other purposes. In Zed Nelson’s *Gun Nation* exhibit at the Newseum (1999) he photographed 200 rolls of Americans who love their guns. At a rifle association convention with his two sons, 10, and 12, a father explains that each boy has three guns, while he has about 50. “The real problem is minorities who have guns; they cause the problems” (Nelson, 1999), the father says. The socially acceptable suburban/rural fascination with guns and the blame directed at urban dwellers is another example of how violence in suburbia is rendered invisible.

Recent research also reveals that football now kills as many students as school shootings. There were 15 school-associated deaths caused by violent crime during the 1999-2000 school year. There were also 15 high school football players who died during regular season and playoff games in 1999, according to the National Federation of State

High School Associations. By October 2000 of the next school year, 11 more athletes died in high school games and practices, and 29 players suffered “catastrophic injuries” on the field, leaving them paralyzed or seriously disabled. When 15 students are killed at school there is widespread outrage. When 15 students are killed in school football fatalities, it is the tacit acceptance of this socially acceptable violence that is flagrant (The Libertarian Party, 2000).

In the urban public high school where I’ve worked, violence is more visible. We’ve had gang members waiting for our students outside the building, and/or herds of our student’s friends waiting to attack a person who is thought to have disrespected this student. The teenagers seem to feel obligated to support each other and protect one another from the onslaught of emotional and physical attacks they might experience from “outside” others. The cliques are less social hierarchies and more safety circles where students draw lines to demarcate who is on their side against those that might threaten them. Thus students get “jumped” by groups of other students and then bring their “posses” to retaliate. Without our school mediation program that has often curtailed this cycle, this could go on for years. Our school has developed a number of interventions to try to prevent and effectively address this violence, addressed more extensively in Chapter Five. It is a visible and a prevalent experience in most New York City public schools. The violence in suburbs, however, is less visible and more institutionalized. Violence becomes less visible because it is considered part of normal male adolescent rites of passage. This acceptance and distorted cultural standard needs to change.

It is necessary to make suburban violence as visible as that in the inner cities, and to expose the underlying roots conflating masculinity and violence in both communities.

Presently wealth, status-power, and social conventions in everyday life disguise daily violence in suburban areas as *normal*. This *common sense* must be exposed as a heinous mask of deep social ills that contribute to making the United States measure the highest incidence of violence in the industrialized world. More attributes need to be valued in suburban communities than athletics, and violence must lose its socially acceptable cloaks. In the next section, the issue of race and otherness is examined as it also helps to legitimize suburban socialized violence

Race or Otherness in the Suburbs

Suburbia, in and of itself, is based on a racist concept of white flight. White, wealthier families continue to leave cities to raise their families in homogenous, “safe havens” away from the “dangerous other.” Widespread discrimination against people of color still takes place in these communities, creating what Massey and Denton call an American apartheid (Massey and Denton, 1984). In cities this segregation continues to take place as well. Economic and racial discrimination is a daily reality, reassuring the white elite of their status-power and reasserting dominance over others.

Since the *raison d’être* of suburbia has been the creation of safe havens from the dangerous others lurking in the deviant cities, reactions to school shootings in white wealthy communities was not just utter disbelief but specifically shock at seeing the heretofore invisible violence lurking quietly in the veneer of suburban shields. “It can’t happen *here*,” is the repeated refrain, implying violence is a problem of poor people of color and not the white elite.

But, in such a culture that overvalues competition and prestige, the lack of diversity in these communities seemed to create a desire for new forms of domination, exclusionary practices, and *even more elite* white elite. Often the more similar people are, the more violent their boundary disputes. Without the historically embedded tensions in urban areas, suburban white flight created its own caste-like system. Alan Wolfe in a *New York Times* editorial depicted divisions between “jocks” and “outsiders” as an historical reflection of upper class prejudice. Wolfe wrote:

If Littleton had its cliques that is because upper-middle class suburbia is one big clique. Racism, homophobia and anti-Semitism, all of which were reported at Columbine became examples of the kids doing to each other what their parents did to the “out” groups they left behind for a better life (Wolfe, 1999).

Wolfe argues that the boys’ parents’ cultural backgrounds were founded in a practice of alienating the “other.” Racism continued in these communities against historically excluded groups, but also reappeared among different white groups as well. These symbolic and sometimes more direct expressions of violence were also concealed in a culture of denial, unspoken but methodically implemented. Subtle, but powerful race issues are revealed by a group of Columbine High School students talking to a reporter. They couldn’t agree on how many African-Americans there were in Columbine High School, demonstrating a disturbing paucity of awareness: “of the around 2,000 kids, there are at most 200 black kids,” said student Andrew Fraser. The group disagreed and finally settled on the number—6 (*The New York Times*, “Terror in Littleton: The Community; Columbine Students Talk of the Disaster and Life” 1999). In fact fifteen of the two thousand students at Columbine High School were African-American (Cullen, “Outsiders Even Among the Outsiders,” 1999).

While the mostly white students were unaware of how few African-American students there are in the school, it is likely that those six students were painfully cognizant of how few students of color were present in that school. They had to know because they comprised the excluded "other." The white students of the mainstream were less concerned with the numbers of people outside their dominant culture.

The relative lack of awareness of race issues may also partially explain the problem. Fraser admitted that when the shooting first occurred, people assumed the perpetrators must be black. He continued: "there was a lot of speculation when it first went off that it was actually black students that came into the school and were shooting everyone else," he said. "Right immediately after everyone had run out of the building and were saying, 'What the heck are you running from?' people were saying, 'I don't know, I just saw some black guy in a trench coat shooting people'" (Ibid.). They just assumed it must be the "other." Race was an integral issue in these communities, not just for its relative absence, but also in the association with fear, danger, and hatred directed at others, generally. "Bad," in this case, student killers, was directly correlated with black, as people assumed these are the only people that could have committed such heinous acts.

Race also played a more direct role in some of the school shootings. Significantly, Harris and Klebold (Colorado 1999) targeted one of their only black classmates, Isaiah Shoels. Connell (1995) explains that marginalized men are likely to turn their anger at other men they believe can be dominated. An intricate dynamic within Connell's categories occurs, as Shoels was both a star football player, and therefore in one respect hegemonic, as well as African-American, and therefore in another respect,

himself, marginalized. The naked wrath directed at Shoels as they hurled racial epithets and shot him three times in the head can be seen as a manifestation of both forms of deadly masculinity: exercising an imagined right to domination, and simultaneously reacting against a perceived hegemonic oppressor. Some of the boys who killed (Colorado 1999, Mississippi 1997) also idealized the infamously racist Hitler as one of their ideological rationales (See Appendix). This cannot be overlooked as indication of the presence of racism as part of the motivation in their crimes.

This culture's predilection for violence has been fairly constant, often changing form, but not relenting. Proclivities towards violence, directed against oneself or against others, is still most prevalent among young people. Youth are considered the highest risk group for acting violently. Gaines writes that prior to 1960, teenage suicide was virtually non-existent. Recall that in the eighties it was considered the second leading cause of death among teenagers. Now more than 400,000 adolescents commit suicide every year. Rural and suburban white kids are more likely to commit suicide, according to statistics, and black kids in impoverished urban areas, are more likely to kill each other (2000, 107). (However, if factoring in athletic and fraternity fatalities these last statistics might appear more similar).

Julia Wrigley (2002) says the suicide rate among people of color in poor communities is much lower than those in suburban cultures because rather than turning inward, resulting in suicide, anger is targeted outward, and rage is a more common experience than emotional depression. People in these communities may project their difficulties on those who seem to be visibly in power, those who are white and wealthy. Religion is also a common staple in poorer communities. Faith that conditions will

improve help people contend with everyday economic difficulties, an historical phenomenon leading Marx to declare religion, the opiate of the people. In upper class, generally white communities alienation is less easily attributed to external forces. Failure can't be blamed on an oppressive elite, and anger, instead, is directed inward, resulting in more suicide. The tendency to blame the individual or the family-as-the-problem, may also come from these circumstances, a less obvious external culprit, masking larger social problems. In light of this phenomenon, it is interesting that most of the boys who killed, who were both white and wealthy, turned their anger on others, not just themselves. While they themselves were part of a white elite, they were also the victims of an oppressive hierarchy; the agents of their exploitation were the *more elite* "preps and jocks" who harassed them. The boys who killed, like many less affluent people of color in urban communities, had an explanation for their despair that was not attributable to their own personal failures. They were generally considered geeks, nerds, gay, or otherwise different, for "as long as anyone could remember." That they possessed a lack of "masculinity" became an ideological prison. Their lack of social status was internalized as destructively as many people of color experienced racism, and impoverished families experience classism. The school hierarchy functioned as a mirror of the social inequalities imprisoning people left behind in historical white bourgeois flight. Yet many of the boys who killed either successfully or unsuccessfully also tried to commit suicide, following their massacres (See Appendix). Harris and Klebold (Colorado 1999) killed themselves, and most of the boys asked to be killed after their shooting. "I wanted to die," said Woodham (Mississippi 1997). After his shooting, Thomas Solomon (Georgia 1999) fell to his knees and had the gun pulled from his mouth

in the last instant (Sack, “Guns and Schools: The Overview; Youth With 2 Guns Shoots 6 at Georgia School,” 1999). These boys blamed “preps and jocks,” but as members of a white elite, they also blamed themselves. In a culture that stresses individual success--“pulling oneself up from the bootstraps”--it is easier, especially when social conditions appear good, to blame the self. There has been a fivefold jump in the homicide and suicide rates of boys in the last 40 years, a rise some experts attribute to increasing male depression and anger (LeBlanc, 1999).

Violence, Naturally

The force of historical classist and racist tendencies directed at the boys who killed, the incessant name-calling, the attacks on their masculinity, the lack of support from their teachers, parents, and the other authorities in their life, left the boys who killed to settle the score on their own. They reported that they felt wretched, abused, hurt, and mad. Evan Ramsey (Alaska 1997) said he didn’t take his troubles to an adult because when he had complained in the past, he usually got punished and shipped off to yet another foster home” (Toomey, 1998). His alternative, he thought, was violence. Franz Fanon writes: “At the level of individuals, violence is a cleansing force. It frees the native from his inferiority complex and from his despair and inaction; it makes him fearless and restores his self-respect” (Fanon, 1961). This perspective helps explain why boys with such low self-esteem and despair, might turn to violence. As horrifying as their actions were, the “rationality” of their actions to them becomes clearer.

There was some expectation among the boys that others in their community should behave differently, that peers should treat them respectfully and that the

authorities in their lives should defend them. *The New York Daily News* reports that one half of all teachers surveyed said they would not intervene if they saw students being bullied.

One boy interviewed for *The New York Times* explained:

First people harassed me because I was really smart.” He says things are better now, but on a routine day he reports being “body-slammed and shoved into chalkboards and dropped into trash cans headfirst. At a school dance, in the presence of chaperones and policemen, he was lifted up by one of the jocks in the school who ripped a pocket off his pants.... (LeBlanc, 1999).

He doesn’t get help from the adults around him... He suspects they have their reasons—some don’t care-- while others worry only about physical attack which they then consider only “horsing around” (Ibid.)

Arendt writes: “Only where there is reason to suspect that conditions could be changed and are not does rage arise. Only when our sense of justice is offended do we react with rage” (1970, 63). Some of the boys’ manifestos revealed their belief that their conditions could and should be different. They thought they were treated unfairly, and it was only through their own actions that their perception of justice could be served.

Arendt argues that when conditions are experienced as unjust, violence can begin to feel intuitive. “To resort to violence when confronted with outrageous events or conditions is enormously tempting because of its inherent immediacy and swiftness” (Ibid. 63). Under such conditions of torment, it is “natural,” she says, to express it, almost inhuman not to. “In this sense, rage and violence that sometimes--not always-- goes with it belongs among the ‘natural’ human emotions, and to cure men of them would mean nothing less than to dehumanize or *emasculate* him” (Ibid. 64-74, emphasis

mine). The boys who killed practically articulated these words verbatim on their own behalf.

Whether or not such a reaction is *natural* or *socially conditioned* is an issue addressed in chapter four. What is interesting about Arendt's statement is her choice of words, to *emasculate him*, a phrase she makes comparable with to *dehumanize him*. It is not an issue Arendt pursues but it is particularly revealing within the context discussed here. These boys were called *gay*, *faggot*, and other feminizing names. If our society valued "femininity," these words would not be used as epithets for verbal abuse. They would be as innocuous as the word, *heterosexual*. Such words are used to challenge masculinity itself, to suggest a lack of bravery, strength, and male power. Boys are generally taught to fight when their masculinity is questioned. They are told that if they don't show their power immediately, they will suffer this abuse continuously.

In the autobiographical book, *Fist Stick Knife Gun*, Geoffrey Canada (1995) writes about how his mother insisted he fight to protect his little brother, and himself. As an adult working with boys involved in violence, Canada observes:

Institutions doing nothing to protect the child. The child coming home scared, scarred, looking to them for protection that they could not provide. The parents feelings as if they had no alternative. Accept it, this is a violent world, so teach them to cope by acting more violently than the others (Ibid. 6).

Canada also notes how teachers sanction school status-hierarchies and the messages sent to victimized children:

They knew that a couple of students were allowed to get away with stuff nobody else could. They knew there was no one to protect them if certain students threatened or hit them. I've seen it over and over again; when

children feel that adults cannot or will not protect them, they devise ways of protecting themselves (Ibid. 25).

This effort to defend masculinity cuts across urban and suburban, class, and race lines; Canada is addressing the experiences of urban boys, but the suburban boys who killed also believed they had to fight to protect their masculinity. They also cited teachers that sanctioned or encouraged the abuse against them, and they also insisted that they needed to fight to send a message of power that would prevent further abuse. None of them seemed to believe they could win such a battle without the use of weapons against the larger, more prestigious boys in their school. "I have seen young men do this time and time again," Canada writes, "that is, take on a challenge with no hope of winning, simply because a threat to one's 'manhood' couldn't go unanswered" (Ibid. 59). Canada cautions further: "(It's) not like Vietnam where Americans if they survived, came home. The war today is *home*" (Ibid. x, emphasis in original).

Again in urban and suburban communities, these are no longer just fights with fists, but wars with weapons, and often multiple deaths. In urban areas, these problems are not considered apocalyptic. People in urban neighborhoods experience random shootings, vandalism, and rampant destruction as normal aspects of everyday life. The normalization process works differently to protect culture from perceiving its cultural disturbances. In cities, the violence is accepted as a part of *deviant* culture, the problem child that holds the dysfunction for the entire family. In suburbs, the violence is concealed as an acceptable part of daily life, *not deviant*, but normal and acceptable. Here the violence is sanctioned and then the problem is safely located elsewhere. The boys who killed in suburbs tried to blow-up their schools, seeming to target not just

people, but a system of oppression and abuse. The violence within both communities comes from the same underpinnings, but it is only visible in urban areas against the white, wealthy backdrop of the exculpated suburbs.

The humiliation of being “feminized” in a culture that values masculinity writ large gnaws at these boys’ vulnerable core, their fear of failing at the great task before them--becoming a man. Absent is the notion that becoming a man can encompass what is considered “feminine,” and even “gay”. Without transforming culture, this spate of school shootings inflamed by masculinity injuries continues to grow. These outbursts can be seen as a form of riot, or small rebellions all over the country, boys trying to communicate to their schools, to the nation, to the world, that something is amiss. People have heard their cries, but the message is still muffled. The passive acceptance of violence in urban areas and the denial of violence in suburbs reveal how contemporary discourse ignores deep social fissures. Superficial accusations, relating to issues like violence in the media and chance are made at a tremendous price.

CHAPTER FOUR:**IMMEDIATE MASCULINITY GRATIFICATION**

Chapter three addressed how violence is made invisible in the suburbs through various social conventions, and how social hierarchies are maintained and reified through ideological constructions that come to be seen as normal or invisible. Violence becomes the external response to these orientations that situate certain people in unjust or lower levels on a hierarchy. The boys who killed reacted to perceived injustices, and in Fanon's sense of "mad fury" attacked the people they saw as their oppressors.

This chapter addresses the specific ideological constructions with which the boys who killed were struggling. As young boys, anxious to become men, they were having a particularly difficult time. In the media, each of them was described as "skinny," "scrawny," or "chubby" (See Appendix). This was a stark contrast with the boys they targeted who were called "preps and jocks" and who were generally referred to as larger and more athletic. Each of the boys who killed specifically aimed at boys they said had attacked their masculinity and/or girls who had rejected them. In most cases the boys who killed were called something derogatory associated with homosexuality like "gay," or "faggot." The boys who killed seemed to be trying to reverse this perception. By picking up guns associated with stalwart masculinity and dominating their enemies completely and totally, they tried to prove they were even more masculine than their more typically "masculine" aggressors.

The ideological/gender construction of masculinity, then, was instrumental in their motivation to kill. This chapter addresses the components of a constructed

masculinity that reifies homophobia, misogyny, and violence as part and parcel of this gender identification. Most people in their communities seemed to share this perspective of masculinity, not just the “preps and jocks” who harassed them. The boys who killed did not seem to be challenging these expectations; such qualities become so entrenched in social norms as to be considered *natural* aspects of masculinity. Instead the boys who killed tried to trump the masculinity expressed by their enemies. Then when people asked: “how could it happen here?” and “why did everybody miss the warning signs?” the common “boys will be boys” refrain emerges as the ideological mask that hid the answers to these questions. Because boys are expected to be violent, homophobic, and misogynistic, these tendencies did not alarm anyone in the community. After all, the “preps and jocks” were practicing these social conventions with the highest visibility, and as successful athletes, they were the most celebrated members of their community. The social construction of masculinity is then strongly implicated in the school shootings, and examined further in the following section.

Masculinity Defined

If masculinity is implicated in the spate of school shootings across the nation, it is important to understand what is considered male. The debate over nature and nurture is paramount. If homophobia, misogyny, and violence are innate components of masculinity, what are the prospects for change? If they are socially constructed, is change more likely? Many would argue that these attributes are natural, and therefore intractable. Before addressing the impact of the constitution of masculinity, and its role in school shootings, a discussion concerning the nature/nurture debate briefly follows to

allow for a point of departure from either orientation. The debate is important because resistance to cultural transformation is often founded on the belief that gender is innate and therefore immutable. The challenge, however, is to look beyond this argument. Even if such qualities are inborn, (although, I argue that they are not), civilization is predicated on the human ability to think critically, and control and shape behavior. Thus, I argue that even if gender is innate, it is susceptible to change that promotes community and peace, rather than violence and destruction. If gender is not innate, but socially constructed, it is particularly amenable to metamorphosis.

Those that argue that masculine behaviors are innate tend to cite biology as an underlying assumption. The argument is that masculinity is a relatively homogenous natural development following the biological development of a Y chromosome instructing the gonad to turn into a testis. While even the most conservative social scientist must admit some variations in what constitutes manhood, many qualities associated with masculinity are routinely asserted as *natural*.

For instance, relative to women, men have historically been said to be distinctly different in qualities like muscular definition: (larger); vocal sound: (deeper); behavioral tendencies: (aggressive, competitive); cognitive abilities: (mathematics, physics); and professional choices: (politics, business). In the past two decades, cognitive and professional attributes have been disengaged from the biological realm and effectively debunked as social constructs. Remaining are those qualities still associated with biology, a science commonly used to aid and abet socially conservative political and religious beliefs. In "How to Build a Man," Anne Fausto-Sterling (1996) critiques the

truths asserted by biological and medical scientists concerning the male body and its attendant social characteristics.

Historical beliefs concerning the relationship between biology and social behavior have been systematically discredited. For instance, the belief that gay sexuality is not natural, that women are inferior to men intellectually and morally, and minorities possess less intelligence as a result of brain size. These kinds of theories have at different times been considered immutable truths, and yet today, most people consider them spurious.

Nonetheless there are well-known proponents of the socio-biological perspective. For instance David Barash recognizes that most criminal violence is committed by men, and comes to the conclusion that "Violence may or may not be as American as cherry pie, but it is as male as can be" (Barash, 2002). Barash's conclusion is that because of the high incidence of male violence as opposed to female violence, that this is a biological drive and not socially learned or perpetrated. What Barash neglects in these declarations is that even if violence were a natural male disposition, the role of civilization is to curb and socialize those impulses. Even if his theory were correct, the cultural failure to contain this violence is the more important concern. Furthermore, instead of civilizing these drives, widespread cultural messages encourage men to be more violent and dominant. Finally many qualities associated with men as opposed to women have been debunked as mentioned above. It may be that the current inextricable link between men and violence may soon be seen as similarly spurious.

Barash also questions whether violence is as "American as cherry pie." Yet he recognizes murder rates internationally: 0.5 homicides occur per million people per year in Iceland, approximately 10 murders per million/year in Europe, and over 100 in the

United States (Barash, 2002). Surely the discrepancy in these figures indicates some cultural role in the incidence of violence. Barash also writes that men are disproportionately both the perpetrators and victims of their own violence. In this declaration however, Barash neglects the FBI concern that violent attacks by men is the number one threat to the health of American women (Velte, 1998).

Barash tries to defend links between men and violence as almost necessary. "Natural Selection has outfitted males with the tools for success in male-male competition, much of it violent," he writes (Barash, 2002). While in fact individual competition is perceived by many experts as increasingly destructive. Even cut throat business schools teach people to work cooperatively in teams for the common good of the company rather than strike out alone. In fact in the modern world, there are few situations in which a proclivity towards violence would be beneficial; in terms of evolution it would make more sense for men to become less violent, rather than more. In the end, it is still the cultural messages and pressures that seem to keep these links alive. Barash recognizes that 37% of all murders are considered "trivial" in origin, but again disparages the idea that social pressures to defend manhood at all costs may be more at fault than the evolutionary instinct that would probably not turn to violence unless life was at stake.

Barash's argues that because violence is noted among men in many cultures as well as animals--that this must be the biological and thus definitive behavior of men. In stopping at this point Barash ignores the variations in violence among different cultures, and therefore the capacity for a sophisticated culture to rise above this disposition whether or not it is natural. He doesn't recognize the high incidence of violence against

women in his effort to argue that violence is mostly a dynamic between men. Finally, he disparages the idea that men are what he calls *equipotential*--capable of living in an egalitarian society. Barash insists: "It isn't true" "(Barash, 2002, 9) paving the unfortunate way for an increasingly hierarchal society.

Biology has often been used as a conservative apology for preserving traditional gender roles. Physics, by contrast, has helped to unlink these affiliations. According to basic tenets of the scientific method developed by Francis Bacon in the 1400s and still used today, science is not about proving truth; the only role science can play is to falsify--to expose what it is not true. Karl Popper develops these ideas further, explaining that the repetition of experiments only helps to gather evidence that certain conclusions are *not* possible.

In 1927 Werner Heisenberg became known for another principle that revolutionized conventional science methodology, culminating in unimaginable consequences not just for physics, but for sociology as well. His contribution to quantum physics, as it came to be called, began with the *Uncertainty Principle*. According to this theory, it is not possible to know both the position and velocity of a particle; the more accurately you know one, the less you know the other, because the act of observation itself changes the particle such that it is no longer the same as it was prior to this act. In collaboration with Neils Bohr this formed the basis of *The Copenhagen Interpretation* or *complimentarity*: the behavior of an electron can be understood completely only by measuring it simultaneously in both the wave and particle form, but this is ultimately impossible--making the acquisition of knowledge essentially problematic. Their conclusions exploded the notion of objective science as we know it. Sociologically, these

theories are groundbreaking because, extrapolated, they imply that the position of the observer affects the information gathered and, suggests further, that perceiving social conditions from one perspective can appear to preclude other interpretations; a focus on object A, involves a neglect of object B. (Kelves, 2000). This understanding helped to legitimate multiple interpretations, making problematic the historically sociological “science” of one truth. It becomes difficult to perceive anything as innate or independent of social forces.

In light of these theories, Fausto-Sterling (1996) questions the methods of scientists and psychologists who claim to know the truth about gender. For instance, John Money, basing his theories on biological science, wrote that there are only two possible gender determinants--absolute male and absolute female. In the scientific tradition, focusing on what is false to determine truth, he made these conclusions by studying variations that developed when different results occurred. Fausto-Sterling examines Money's studies with perplexed humor as she explains that biological investigators observe the infrequent to define the normal. Rather than recognize infrequent tendencies as equally normal, but, simply less frequent, the infrequent is called abnormal, and the more common, normal. Thus for Money and others in the medical world, the abnormal requires management to be converted to normal. Biologists and physicians, then, use “natural variation” to define normality. Fausto-Sterling writes, ironically, “they set out to eliminate the natural variation that gave them their definitions in the first place” (Ibid.)

When masculinity is defined today as strong, muscular, aggressive, and/or competitive, huge numbers of males who do not have these dominant characteristics are

defined as abnormal variations. They are made to feel inferior, or *worse*, “female.”

The boys who killed were physically abnormal according to these traditional masculine standards. They were smaller, and less physically developed than their more athletic male peers. Instead of being considered another variation of male, just as natural as the “jocks and preps” in the school, they were ostracized; they were made into pariahs of their school and gender. The power of discourse is visible here as the social culture in these communities perpetuated these stereotypes. Boys without the more common characteristics are then pressured to find an external phallus, in the Lacanian sense--a signifier of power, to compensate for their “missing manhood.” Some manifestations of such efforts include, the intake of dangerous steroids, valorization of excessive violence, acquisition and use of guns, and obsessive engagement in war-like video games. Since all the boys who killed were of the “unnatural variation,” (skinny, smaller, chubbier), extreme violence, signifying a robust masculinity, became one way to compensate. The cultural fabric of society must then be examined so that more variations of masculinity can exist as socially tenable alternatives. By exclusively blaming the individual boys, rather than the culture, it is impossible to find the “abnormal” in the “normal”--or the less frequent among the more frequent--to make a constructive critique of the conditions helping to create these social realities.

This challenge must be waged on many fronts. According to Fausto-Sterling (1996) the social humiliation engendered by having anything less than the most extreme masculine characteristics for little boys is constructed and maintained partly by dominant medical discourse. In medicine, says Fausto-Sterling, one rule of thumb is that a boy born with a penis less than 0.6 long should not remain male. “Despite the fact that the

intact organ promises to provide orgasmic pleasure to the future adult, it is surgically removed (along with the testes) and replaced by a much smaller clitoris which may or may not retain its sexual function" (Ibid. 130-131), Fausto-Sterling writes. The implication is that the boy must have a sufficiently large penis so that there is no doubt about his male identification in the mind of the boy, his family, and his peers. Rather than suffer the indignity of a small penis in a culture that values the phallus writ large, the boy is surgically made into the "girl" he will doubtless be associated with anyway. Following this science-enforced-socialization, other deviations from such arbitrary notions of "normal" masculinity have been prohibited. Attraction to same-sex partners is similarly negated in Fausto-Sterling's terms as a natural biological variation. Because only about ten percent of the population is generally gay, this tendency becomes a relative outlier in favor of the more statistically significant occurrence of heterosexuality.

Judith Butler exposes how this "biological variation" is repressed through social, rather than medical procedures. In "Melancholy Gender/Refused Identification" (1995), she argues that gender is not just constructed, but performative. Women and men conform to binary sexual differences, producing rigid and fictional constructions of reality. According to Butler, these one-dimensional roles inscribe sexuality as oppositional--producing compulsory, socially sanctioned heterosexuality, whereby masculine and feminine qualities are dramatically bifurcated to produce traditional expressions of gender. "Identity," is then, "performatively constituted by the very 'expressions' that are said to be its results," she writes (Ibid. 5).

According to the famous Kinsey Report (Weeks, 1985), all people fall on a sexual orientation continuum between 1 and 6: 1 being homosexual and 6 being heterosexual.

People who fall in these two extremes are the most rigidly identified as homosexuals and heterosexuals respectively. Contrary to popular opinion, unadulterated heterosexuality is then, itself an outlier, a statistically insignificant group compared to the rest of the population. According to Kinsey, most people are bisexual to some degree, and will either manifest their desires or repress them in favor of dominant sexual expectations (Ibid.). Jeffrey Weeks was among many who echoed this perspective, citing homosexual behavior as a cross-cultural phenomenon (Ibid.).

According to Butler, same-sex attraction is socially prohibited, and routinely denied, falsely preserving heterosexual desire as the dominant or only "natural" orientation. Butler posits, following Freud in *The Ego and the Id*, that this lost homosexual attraction becomes a melancholy, an unfinished grief, incorporated and preserved in and as the ego, through identification. Melancholy is the refusal of grief, and the incorporation of loss. Strict heterosexuality mandates the loss of homosexual attachments and is cultivated through prohibition. The strict heterosexual disavowal of this attachment becomes a refusal to grieve, and this loss is repeated and ritualized throughout culture. Heterosexuality is then, not an expression of gender, but the product of what remains inarticulate in sexuality. Since the loss can't be articulated or externalized, it attaches to the ego itself in the form of the superego or guilt --- implementing guilt wrought from an inability to grieve the loss of homosexuality. Extreme manifestations of heterosexuality become an "acting out" of gender, related to the problem of unacknowledged loss (Ibid. 32). Thus, same-sex object love while never grieved is preserved through the extreme binary division of male and female identification. The culture of heterosexual melancholy can be read in the hyperbolic

identifications by which mundane heterosexual masculinity and femininity is confirmed. For instance, the man becomes the man he never loved, and never grieved. Such theories of homosexuality and bisexuality as universals instead of abnormal outliers belie the science seeking to marginalize them. Masculinity and femininity are necessarily re-cast in new light that allows for more variation and wider continuums of expected gender and sexual behavior. Such an expanded understanding is ultimately imperative for access to a wider and more diverse human expression.

Gender norms tend to be supported, constructed, and reified in consumer culture as extreme binary oppositions. The capitalist market depends on the false identification of gender “acting-out,” a performance that can ultimately never be accomplished because men contain other qualities than those associated with “masculinity,” and women are not only “feminine.” Both share qualities associated with both these identifications. Thus when markets fetishize extreme “masculinity” for men, and ultimate “femininity” for women, the impossibility of these expectations become seductive as men and women continue to *buy* their appropriate gender symbols in an effort to accomplish the unattainable gender goals they have come to idealize. When men fail to embody perfect “masculinity,” and women similarly falter, they buy make-up, diet paraphernalia, gender-enhancing clothes, muscle builders, perfume, and the like to constantly try to meet the unattainable gender expectations. Similarly resistance commodities reify the polar reversal of gender norms. Many of the boys who killed admired Marilyn Manson, a male rock star whose indignation was amplified by his make-up and “feminine” paraphernalia. Thus young boys have binary choices, the commercially produced “Rambo” or his body-negative, “Manson.” The impossible binary split, one seen as social compliance, the

other as resistance, are unattainable expectations, perpetuating greater alienation, and bolstering desires to continue to buy or otherwise demonstrate the appropriate gender expectation.

All this would seem to suggest that the socialization of gender and the associated heterosexual affiliations is economically and socially produced, rather than an immutable biological reality. Such a conclusion allows for reconstructing more diverse and socially supported variations in masculine and feminine gender identification. Gender is a particularly entrenched ideology, however. Raising consciousness against a presumed false one also entertains complex obstacles. To expect liberation from gender prescriptions as a result of advancing awareness forgets, according to Bourdieu, “the opacity and inertia that stem from the embedding of social structures in bodies” (Bourdieu, 2001, 40). Gender is not just supported by ideas and ideology, but is founded on what Bourdieu calls symbolic violence:

A gentle violence, imperceptible and invisible even to its victims, exerted for the most part through the purely symbolic channels of communication and cognition (more precisely, misrecognition), recognition, or even feeling. This extraordinarily social relation thus offers a privileged opportunity to grasp the logic of the domination exerted in the name of a symbolic principle known and recognized both by the dominant and by the dominated--a language (or a pronunciation), a lifestyle (or a way of thinking, speaking, and acting)--and, more generally, a distinctive property, whether emblem or stigma, the symbolically most powerful of which is that perfectly arbitrary and non-predictive bodily property...(Ibid. 1-2).

Thus, gender is maintained through social institutions: family, Church, school, as well as ideology, but it is also so internalized as to appear natural, because it becomes the common sense of language, gestures, and daily social relations. Domination by “hegemonic” men towards less “masculine” men, and towards women, then, is not just

maintained by constraint or consent. Symbolic domination is exerted through schemes of perception, appreciation, and action, below the level of consciousness and will, and within a “cognitive relationship that is profoundly obscure to itself” (Ibid. 37). Symbolic force, then, is exerted not through physical constraint, but at the deepest level of the body. Then the dominated contribute to the process of being dominated by tacitly and unknowingly accepting the limits imposed, manifesting in the form of bodily emotions-- shame, humiliation, timidity, anxiety, and guilt. The passions of the dominated--“a somatized social relationship, a social law converted into an embodied law--are not of the kind that can be suspended by a simple effort of will, founded on a “liberatory” awakening of consciousness, writes Bourdieu:

Because the foundation of symbolic violence lies not in mystified consciousness that only need to be enlightened but in dispositions attuned to the structure of domination of which they are the product the relation of complicity that the victims of symbolic domination grant to the dominant can only be broken through a radical transformation of the social conditions of production of the dispositions that lead the dominated to take the point of view of the dominant on the dominant and on themselves. Symbolic violence is exercised only through an act of knowledge and practical recognition which takes place below the level of the consciousness and will and which gives all its manifestations--injunctions, suggestions, seduction, threats, reproaches, orders or calls to order---their ‘hypnotic power’. But a relations of domination that functions only through the complicity of dispositions depends profoundly, for its perpetuation or transformation, on the perpetuation or transformation of the structures of which those dispositions are the product...(Ibid. 41-42).

Thus, Bourdieu explains how gender comes to appear natural, but rests on an ideological and somatic framework that obscures the construction of associated attributes.

Masculinity, then, becomes not just a list of typical qualities but also a deeply inscribed mode of behavior, gestures, and emotional expression.

When the boys who killed rebelled against the “preps and jocks” that abused them, and the girls who rejected them, they did not resist the internalized gender inscription, but rather acted on and within it, caught as tightly bound as the “preps and jocks” who dominated them with “masculinity” authority. The task of unlocking the chains of masculinity ideology both on the dominant and the dominated lies deep within these social conventions practiced in everyday institutions.

In the end, whether or not, it is assumed that typical masculine and feminine attributes relate to biology or social construction, and whether or not homosexuality is as natural as heterosexuality becomes irrelevant. As will become increasingly clear in this section, contemporary expectations for masculinity are so destructive, and potentially fatal, that whether they are natural or deeply entrenched socialized prescriptions, they are in desperate need of overhaul. Many seemingly natural instincts have been tamed by civilization. As Freud writes in *Civilizations and Its Discontents* (1930) this is the purpose of socialization generally. Similarly, the current masculinity expectations of domination, homophobia, misogyny, and violence, if immersed in social institutions, must be recognized as destructive to the species and to the world. From either perspective, there is little choice but to make efforts towards transforming these barbaric symptoms.

The next section addresses in more detail the components of contemporary masculinity expectations, including homophobia, misogyny, and domination/violence.

Homophobia

Gay-bashing: Subordinated Masculinity

A crucial component of this dissertation is the effect of these devastating masculinity expectations whether natural or social on young boys as they become men. In *Masculinities*, Connell writes that violence against women and against men perceived as gay, are some of the disturbing behaviors historically considered natural for men.

The boys who killed in these school violence cases were harassed and abused by the “preps and jocks” in their school for not making the hegemonic grade and for seeming feminine. Such a social hierarchy was so familiar that this abuse was generally tolerated. Earlier I described the four components of Connell’s masculinities analysis: *hegemonic, subordinate, complicit, and marginalized*. Connell’s *subordinated* masculinity comes into play here, as the boys who killed seemed to interact with the more hegemonic boys at school within this paradigm. As a *subordinated* masculinity, heterosexual men who are perceived as feminine can be subjugated in the same way as women and gay men. Connell writes:

Gay masculinity is the most conspicuous, but it is not the only subordinated masculinity. Some heterosexual men as well as boys are expelled from the circle of legitimacy. The process is marked by a rich vocabulary of abuse, including wimp, nerd, sissy, mama’s boy, dweeb, geek...Here too, the symbolic blurring with femininity is obvious (1995, 71).

At the small school where I have been a Guidance Supervisor for five years-- almost all the violent incidents have been reactions to this kind of harassment. While thankfully we have not experienced shootings, my students have been relentlessly teased, “jumped” by other students, and sometimes become the victim of gang attacks. The two

most common causes of these violent acts are boys reacting indignantly to being called “gay,” or some similar term, or boys attacking other boys who “talked to” their girlfriends or a girl they liked. In each case injuries to one’s manhood was at stake, and boys felt forced to prove their ability to demonstrate violent domination to restore their masculinity status. In three cases the boys who were harassed left our school altogether, an otherwise supportive, small community. These boys seemed to feel that the public injury was so great that efforts to address and/or resolve them would be futile. They feared becoming the pariahs of the schools, picked-on relentlessly as the boys who killed in these cases professed to experience. In many of those suburban schools there may not have been that many other places to go. One of my students in this situation moved to the South, and another dropped-out of school altogether. In two of the three cases, the boys who were harassed for being gay were actually homosexual. In the third case, the boys considered himself heterosexual.

In Connell’s words: heterosexual males can also be expelled from the “circle of legitimacy” just for appearing gay or having seemingly feminine qualities. In New York City there are huge resources for young gay students. There is the Harvey Milk School specifically designed to support students who were harassed for being gay. There is the Hetrick Martin Institute offering support and health services for gay-identified young people, the Gay and Lesbian Alliances, and numerous others. Nonetheless, even in the seemingly accepting culture of New York City, these boys felt they had nowhere to turn. Psychically the association with homosexuality felt emasculating and therefore unbearable. Michelangelo, writing for *Gay.com* also empathized with these reactions as a gay man. After being taunted for being a “fag,” Signorile turned to violence. “I believe I

was doing whatever I had to do in desperate moments, when parents and teachers were not there for me, to preserve whatever sanity I had left and to guard against physical and verbal attack,” he said (Signorile, 2001). Whether actually gay or just associated with homosexuality, such taunts incurred similar responses. This seems to be the kind of experience the boys in these cases experienced as well. The *New York Times* reports a study that an average “high school boy hears 25 antigay slurs a day. “To be an outcast boy is to be a “non-boy,” to be feminine, to be weak. Bullies function as a kind of peer police enforcing a social code (LeBlanc, 1999).

When boys are called these kinds of names an aggressive response is often incurred. This section addresses how “preps and jocks” subordinated the boys who killed by accusing them of having feminine or homosexual attributes. Specifically, Barry Loukaitis (Washington 1996), age 14, said he killed a popular boy because the boy had called him a fag (Egan, *From Adolescent Angst to Shooting up Schools*, 1998, A1).

In Mississippi (1997) Woodham reported that he was ridiculed about his physical appearance in school and called gay (Cloud, “Of Arms and Boys,” 1998). He said he was responding to a lifetime of abuse. Stephanie Walker, a senior at Pearl High School, confirmed his reports: “Other boys knocked books from his hands and he took it without so much as a cuss word. He never fought back when other boys called him names” (Holland, 1997). Walker continued: “He was picked on for as long as I can remember. Most people who aren’t popular get picked on” (Ibid.). Woodham reported that his mother picked on him too. She called him, “fat, stupid, and lazy,” he said (Ibid.). Woodham stabbed his mother dead before heading to school to kill his peers (Ibid.).

In Kentucky (1997), Carneal reported to a psychiatrist that he felt tormented by whispers at school that he was gay (Adams, 1998) and when other kids called him a faggot (Blank, 1998). In a school essay, he wrote: "After a cruel day at H.M.S. (Heath Middle School) when someone put in the school newspaper that I was gay, I went home and cried, yes I admit it, I cried" (Adams, 1998). Carneal struggles with how unacceptable it is for boys to cry, admitting this very reluctantly. He cried again when asked why he committed the shootings. "I guess I just got mad 'cause everybody kept making fun of me." When asked what names he was called, the boy added, "nerd, and they were always calling me crack baby, and freak, 'cause I'm different, I guess" (Adams and Malone, 1999). In middle school, someone pulled down Carneal's pants in front of his other classmates, part of a series of humiliations he suffered (Blank, 1998). Just before the school shootings, two boys had acted as if they were going to fight Carneal, and Carneal ran away (Adams, "Outsider's Destructive Behavior Spiraled Into Violence," 1999). Media reports documented that Carneal wrote obsessively about harming the "popular, preppie students" whom he blamed for his mistreatment (Adams, Hall, Malone, and Riley, 1998).

Time Special Report recorded in Arkansas (1998) that "Mitchell (Johnson) seemed to yearn for male approval." "Mitchell always wanted to prove to me that he was a tough guy," his father Scott Johnson told *Time* (Cloud, "Of Arms and Boy," 1998). Trying to compensate, by "talking tough," Mitchell was often beaten up by other boys. Johnson had a hard time fitting in at Westside Middle School, and he said the shooting was to get back at the people who had hurt him (O'Brien, 1998). In Oregon (1998). Kipland Kinkel cried often in school because kids made fun of him for being smaller than

the others his age (Bernstein, 1998, 5). Sick of being belittled and humiliated, *The Oregonian* reported that Kinkel implied to a friend that he killed his parents “to blunt their embarrassment” when he was suspended the day before for bringing a gun to school (Ibid. 3). Pollack (1998) says that boys are afraid of shame. Pollack wrote prophetically: “Some boys will kill to avoid feeling shame” (Gwartney, 1998). Kinkel killed his father while he was calling to enroll his son in “boot camp,” a program for troubled youths. The *Cincinnati Post* reported that being sent to this program was another source of shame for Kinkel (Popyk, “Violence is Seductive To A New Breed of Killers,” 1998).

Klebold and Harris' (Colorado 1999) motivation was also directly related to frustration with gender expectations and masculinity hierarchies. They wanted to kill the “jocks” who called them “gay.” The “jocks” corroborated these claims. Ben Oakley from the soccer team said, “nobody really liked them...the majority of them were gay. So everyone would make fun of them.” A member of the football team said, “(A friend) used to tell me how they would take showers together. He told me most of them were gay.” Jon Vandermark, a sophomore said: “They were called freaks, homos and everything in between” (Cullen, “The Rumor That Won’t Go Away,” 1999). The animosity between the “jocks” and these boys was palpable in the school. When Klebold and Harris began shooting, many of the “jocks” clearly understood why. Senior Dustin Thurmon, from the wrestling team admitted: “The ones they shot first were the ones who made fun of them. They could have got me, ‘cause yeah, I made fun of them, sadly I did,” and then: “They should have been able to take it” (O’Shaughnessy, 1999). Clearly they didn’t want to “take it.” The notion that masculinity means “taking it like a man” was one of the social expectations that the boys implied drove them toward their “mission.” Marching into the cafeteria at Columbine High School, Harris and Klebold

shouted: "All jocks stand up. We're going to kill everyone of you" (Hutchchinson and Schwartzman, 1999).

Solomon (Georgia 1999) was described by one student as "just a regular kid. Nobody picked on him," the student said. Other students said he was an outcast. "He was a nerd," said Jordan Smith, a sophomore who ran in the more popular crowd. "In homeroom, when everyone else was socializing, he'd sit and do his homework" (Firestone, 1999). A popular boy who had lettered in three sports, Jason Cheek, teased Solomon. Solomon shot Cheek twice in the leg during the rampage. "He really picked on T.J. (Solomon) just because T.J was so quiet," said one of Solomon's friends, "You know, like being quiet made him weird in the eyes of that little clique of theirs." Apparently Solomon was convinced that he was destined to become the campus pariah—"and that idea kept building inside him until he picked up a gun," said his friend Stacey Singleton, (Cloud, "Just A Routine School Shooting, 1999). The "jocks" that tormented Solomon also seemed to be sanctioned in the school community. One of Cheek's friends, Michael Woods, referred to the shooting as almost a cheap way for the picked-on students to defend themselves. "Kids like T.J. are seeing it and hearing about it all the time now. It's like the new way out for them" (Ibid.).

In Santee, California, Andy Williams age 15, was often called "gay," faggot," and "pussy" (McCarthy, 2001, Signorile, 2001). Bigger students would burn their lighters and then press the hot metal against his neck. "They'd walk up to him and sock him in the face for no reason," said Williams' friend Laura Kennamer (McCarthy, 2001).

In Meyer Levin's historical novel, Compulsion, (1956) now an ominous precursor of the more recent school killings, the author documents similar motivations in

what was then called “The Crime of the Century” in Chicago, May 1924. Two wealthy boys, Richard Loeb and Nathan Leopold, Jr., age 18 and 19 respectively, kidnapped and murdered a younger student, Bobby Franks, age 14. The psychiatrists and defense attorney implicated among other things an internal rage against those who perceived them as feminine (Ibid. 193, 535, 390, 393, 537). The psychiatrists in the case said Loeb was “retarded in his masculine development”(Ibid. 393), and Leopold hated himself for being effeminate (Ibid. 390). The boys articulated revenge as one of the motives (Ibid. 94, 127).

Thus, all the boys who killed were attacked for having a less than adequate masculinity. These masculinity attacks reflect the abuse and insecurities experienced by the boys who killed, but it also reflects on “preps and jocks” that hurled these insults at them. It seems that even though the “preps and jocks” were already successful signifiers of masculinity in their schools, dominating the school culture as heroic athletes, they felt they had to continue to fight to preserve this image. By calling the boys who killed, “gay,” the “preps and jocks” constantly reasserted to themselves and to each other, their difference from the “femininity” embodied by the “geekier” boys. Masculinity expectations are so unattainable that even those who seem to have achieved them are ever anxious about maintaining this appearance. This compulsion by the “preps and jocks” to reassert heterosexuality and an invincible, dominating, and homophobic masculinity, reflects the same insecurities about masculinity experienced by the boys who killed.

Martin Kantor (1998) writes that the specific names used in gay bashing reflect the particular anxiety of the person hurling the insults. The names are not chosen at random, he writes (Ibid. 135). According to Kantor, when a boy is called a “sissy,” the

name-caller is expressing insecurities about his own accomplishments. They feel in a sense castrated, Kantor explains, and calling these other boys, “sissy,” makes them feel that these others are less accomplished. This is interesting in light of the fact that many of the school shooters were honor students, and “jocks” are often discouraged from taking their studies as seriously as their athletics. Some of the “jocks” may have envied the academic achievements of the smaller boys. Kantor says the word “fag” is a demeaning term meant to make a feminine-seeming guy feel like a “nerd” or a “creep;” words also associated with intellect rather than physical prowess. Thus, the specific names the “preps and jocks” used reflect their own masculinity anxieties.

Homophobia institutionalized through “Jock” Culture

Homophobia is, then, a condition antagonizing both the “preps and jocks,” and the boys who killed, pressuring both to attain an ideal on the far continuum of heterosexual and typically masculine traits. This pathology/phobia was persistent in the communities of the boys who killed, not just between them and the “preps and jocks,” but in the larger culture as well.

What is it like to be an athlete at Columbine High School? “Pride and respect,” said Varsity Wrestler Nick Jackson (*New York Times*, “Terror in Littleton: The Community; Columbine Students Talk of the Disaster and Life”). “The athletes are the ones...that give the school some of its pride.” Another Columbine student, Andrew Frazer, agreed: “They’re the ones that give the school a sense of accomplishment” (*Ibid.*). That’s not the experience Harris and Klebold had at Columbine High School. They were smart, small, and generally not athletic, clinging to the lower rungs of the social ladders

in their schools, and enduring daily physical and verbal harassment from the more popular boys.

In *Slow Motion: Changing Masculinities, Changing Men* (1990) Lynne Segal writes that homophobia is a form of social control to keep all men in line by oppressing gay men and expressing contempt for men when they express emotional qualities associated with femininity (Ibid. 158). Men impose these masculinity codes on themselves, and each other. Various social institutions, mentioned earlier--guns, media, parents, school, character, resignation--enforce this codification. The cultural common sense is relentless and omnipresent. Bracher writes that being male increases the risk of being violent because boys tend to project their own despised "feminine" qualities on other individuals or groups and then attack it there (2000). Consequently the attacks by the hegemonic "preps and jocks" were motivated by the same homophobic impulses as the defensive terror and rage these assaults engendered in the victims-turned-killers. Segal says boys are taught to despise the "feminine enemy within themselves," and to try to destroy any person that draws attention to these rejected aspects of their personality (Segal, 1990). "Jocks and preps" and the boys who killed, both, were then pawns in homophobic cultural machinations that neither designed, but all perpetuated.

As masculinity becomes increasingly associated with the body itself--an increasingly muscular, steroid supported, large physique--the boys who killed became associated with femininity, the body opposite. In myriad journalistic reports, Woodham (Mississippi 1997) was described as "a short, little fat boy" (Barron, 1999, Anderson, 1999) or alternately, the "chubby, poor kid" (The Associated Press, Lubbock Avalanche-Journal, 1998). Johnson (Arkansas 1998) was also described as "pudgy" (Cloud, "Of

Arms and The Boy.” 1998). His accomplice Golden was described as a “wiry, little, boy” (Jeter, “Arkansas Boys Talked Big but Weren’t Seen As Menace,” 1998). Carneal (Kentucky 1997) was described as “slight,” and a “skinny freshman” (Adams, “Teen-ager’s ever-changing stories frustrated police,” 1998; Blank, “The Kid No One Noticed,” 1998). Kinkel (Oregon 1998) was described as “small” and “skinny” (PBS Frontline, 1999). Klebold (Colorado 1999) was referred to as “lanky,” and Harris as “slight.” Charles Andrew Williams (California 2001) was referred to as “scrawny” (See Appendix).

In contrast, it was the photos of the muscular, and athletic “All-American” jocks that lined the school halls (Belluck and Wilgoren, 1999). It was these images of strength and power that tormented the smaller boys, and challenged their self-esteem. They became representations of “the body-negative,” implying they were “not adequate men,” but, “disabled” or otherwise inadequate. It was not only these images that were so devastating to the boys who killed; this operated in tandem with the real physical harassment by the popular “preps and jocks” in the school, and the tacit or not-so-tacit complicity of the adults in their communities.

Relentless attacks on these adolescents’ masculinity inspired a fierce opposition through violence. Carneal (Kentucky 1997) wrote a story found revealing his fantasies to get revenge on the popular kids that picked on him. It was about a shy kid named Michael who was picked on by “preps” but was saved by a brother with a gun (Blank, “The Kid No One Noticed,” 1998).

Instead of playing football like the popular kids in the school, Carneal played in the band for the football team. This supportive role didn’t afford him the same respect

the athletes received at Heath High School (Ibid.). In Arkansas (1998) 11-year-old Andrew Golden reported that he had wanted to play football and basketball. But he was too slight for one, and too short for the other. Shooting was what he did best, his grandfather told reporters (New York Times, "News Summary," Metropolitan Desk, 1998, 2). Already at 11-years-old, Golden, unable to excel at athletics, turned to guns, a fast-food masculinity, to demonstrate his burgeoning manhood.

Kinkel (Oregon 1999) also said he was "angry about insults from seniors" (Egan, "Oregon Student Held in 3 Killings; One Dead, 23 Hurt," 1998). He once karate kicked another student in the head for calling him a name (Ibid.). In Kinkel's family, athletic prowess was valued highly, another source of shame for Kinkel (PBS, Frontline, 1999). His father was a tennis coach, and spoke of Kip's lack of athletic skill with disappointment. Some of the comments he made about Kip follow: Kipland was not interested in sports, "not blessed with athletic skill." His father tried to get him to play football. "He wasn't good, but he wanted to be." Kipland "wanted to be big," his father added (PBS, Frontline, 1999). The pressure to be a "jock" may have come as much from his father as from the other kids at school. Kinkel shot and killed his father, before heading off to kill the "jocks" at his school. Assuming the masculine athletic standard as a definitive barometer of social status Thomas Solomon (Georgia 1999) was described by one of Solomon's peers, Larry Cohran: "It's not like he was a football star, but he had friends" (Firestone, 1999). The pressure to play the most masculine-affirming, potentially violent sports, like football, is another ramification of the affiliation between masculinity and domination.

Sports parenting expert, Rick Wolff, says: "Too many parents are too pushy to win at all costs, and use their own children as guinea pigs, so they can live their own childhoods all over again" (Butterfield, 2002). Wolff and many other youth sport groups report that parents and coaches are shouting at and taunting--even assaulting--referees and one another at a growing rate." Wolff recommends that parents take a time-out in what he calls "Silent Sundays," where they are not allowed to scream at their children or coaches about the children's athletic abilities. Responding to a recent incident in which a father, Thomas Junta, beat another parent to death at a youth hockey practice, Wolff explains that parents need to become more critical of the barometer that measures young men and their fathers by their athletic success. Wolff's perspectives, however, still make him something of a lone wolf, himself.

Junta was sentenced to 6 to 10 years in prison, double the state's guidelines for his crime, involuntary manslaughter. Yet despite the harsh sentence, the judge made it clear that his "sentence is not meant to send a message to anyone in the outside about parental rage in youth sports," he announced (Ibid.). The judge said he was most concerned about the presence of the sons of both the victim and Mr. Junta because both children witnessed the crime. While the judge had good reason to be concerned about this "aggravating factor," it is interesting that he went out of his way to make clear that he was not concerned about rage in youth sports. It was practically an affirmation of the rage Mr. Junta experienced, another form of complicity to the increasingly inextricable link between masculinity and violence, masquerading in socially acceptable conventions like youth sports.

Masculinity becomes synonymous with practices relating to athletics, fierce competition, and homophobia, and is supported by social structures including school sports, family, and law. The emphasis on sports works as a social vehicle that supports a distinction between the hyper-masculine “good” males from the feminine “bad” males. Losing in athletics must be avoided at all costs to avoid a potential connection with “femininity.” Consequently boys have suffered as many fatalities in sports as they do by other forms of school violence, and fathers, anxious to maintain their own masculinity affiliations through associations with their sons’ physical prowess, are also showing increased injuries and deaths. Athletic arenas become social conditioning agents for reifying connections between masculinity, domination, homophobia, and misogyny.

Homoerotic interactions are masked in this hyper-masculinity training field. The physical contact in many male-associated sports is referenced as masculine, allowing for intimate touches in personal places under the auspices of a purely heterosexual paradigm. Thus, boys can practice typically “feminine/gay” behaviors, in a context where they are reinterpreted as masculine, and therefore, “good.” The same behavior off the field would become the source of relentless torment and ridicule. Homophobia, then, prevents boys from accepting their own “feminine,” homoerotic, and more vulnerable aspects of themselves, and unless manifested in “jock” sports, is turned into self and other hatred. Homophobia maintains the false hyper-heterosexual-masculinity disposition as a form of social control, preventing boys from accepting more diverse aspects of themselves--keeping them alienated and unfulfilled--and consequently enslaving them to the capitalist market that sells the masculinity they fear they lack (fast cars, expensive sports tickets, gym memberships, steroids, etc.).

Homophobia works as a social control mechanism and manifests as an emotional pathology. Kantor writes that homophobia is a debilitating phobic reaction more common in men than women, but surprisingly absent as a diagnosis in the *American Press Textbook of Psychiatry* (1988) or the *DSM IV: The Diagnosis and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, (1998, x). The DSM is often accused of arbitrarily prescribing normality, by declaring other behaviors pathological. Thus, there was some outrage when the DSM labeled PMS a disorder, making what was previously considered part of a regular female cycle, suddenly a type of sickness. It also took time to get homosexuality out of the DSM, finally removing it, at least officially, from the realm of pathology. Kantor suggests that what is missing from the DSM also reveals distorted social mores. While homosexuality used to be a diagnosis in the DSM, Kantor writes, homophobia is the real pathology, a common sickness he attributes to those who put it there in the first place. Because homophobia is considered a normal component of masculinity, the disturbed hatred, violence, and compulsion to kill that it can engender is overlooked as social or personal problem. The sickness is disguised in the social conventions that reify hyper-heterosexuality as proof of masculinity.

Homophobes, Kantor says, tend to believe it is “not a disorder, but order, not a symptom of a character problem, but a sign of strength of character, not a symptom, but a system--of preferential, rational, conscious, unassailable, social, and religious values and beliefs” (Kantor, 1998, xi). The social apparatus that condemns homosexuality or men’s femininity works to preserve this distorted perspective. “Male homophobes who dislike gay men because they are like women really are downplaying and disavowing their feminine side by criticizing and condemning the supposed femininity of others,” he

writes (Ibid. 7). Again, this defense mechanism is evident among the “preps and jocks,” as well as among the reactive boys who killed.

Misogyny in Masculinity

Like the social pressure to harass boys who seem feminine described above, there are also social sanctions for men to harass women. This is the second component of masculinity consistently manifested in the school shootings. Connell explains:

Many members of the privileged group use violence to sustain their dominance. Intimidation of women ranges across the spectrum from wolf-whistling in the street...to murder by a woman's patriarchal owner. Most men do not attack or harass women; but those who do are unlikely to think themselves deviant. On the contrary they usually feel they are entirely justified, that they are exercising a right. They are authorized by an ideology of supremacy (Connell, 1995, 83).

Thus, subordinating women is a ritual asserting masculinity, and an opportunity for men to declare they are "not women." Bernard Lefkowitz writes this poignantly in his book, *Our Guys*, about the gang rape in March 1989 by "jocks" in Glen Ridge, New Jersey. For Lefkowitz, *the ordinary nature of misogyny* contributed to the genesis of the rape. He documents how the town leapt to the defense of the young men, who were "hegemonic" by Connell's definition, with a "boys will be boys" defense. As happens far too commonly, the young girl was blamed for her victimization; she was labeled "promiscuous, a tease, a flirt" (Lefkowitz, 1997). Lefkowitz exposes a taken-for-granted masculinity, allowing this misogyny to reign unchallenged. The boys were known to disturb classes with dirty jokes, and to treat females in the school contemptuously (Ibid. 84). They were not disciplined for their behaviors by parents or school faculty. "They didn't know girls as equals, as true friends, as people you cared about...these young jocks had a callous, abusive manner with girls," wrote Lefkowitz (Ibid. 91).

Lefkowitz continues that the boys had "dutiful parents" who cheered their sons at football games, and went to Church on Sundays. Shiela Kunkle in "Hallow Subjects in

a Headless World” (2000) explains this phenomenon as a manifestation of the Law absent in the family and in the community at large. All the figures of authority--parents, teachers, police, etc--became silent witnesses to the “jocks” perverse behavior. At the court appearance, the fathers, mothers, and girlfriends of the accused stood to represent what Kunkle writes was like “God and motherhood arrayed on the defendants’ side” (Ibid. 304).

In all the school shootings adult authorities seemed to condone the homophobic harassment initially experienced by the boys who killed, and also bore silent witness to the “warning signs.” All the boys widely publicized their intentions to shoot up the school, spoke often of violence and building bombs, and possessed huge arsenals of weapons and bombs in their bedrooms (See Appendix). A “boys will be boys” attitude seemed to condone all this behavior as “typically male”.

The boys who killed targeted “preps and jocks,” but they also specifically vented rage at girls they said made them feel degraded, powerless, suicidal, and empty. While they were not the most powerful in the school, even these subjugated boys could still feel dominant over girls, whom they simultaneously experienced as both their victims and their oppressors. In each of the three school shootings between 1997 and 1998 (Mississippi, Kentucky, Arkansas), as well as the one in Fayetteville, Tennessee (1998), and Flint, Michigan (1999), Atlanta, Georgia (1999), Santee, California (2001), and New York, New York (2002), the boys said they felt rejected or hurt by a girl. While the boy in Michigan wrestled with other issues including poverty and drug-addicted parents, that the victim and perpetrator were both six-year olds who also recently argued, lends even more urgency to these matters.

Examples of the boys' resentment towards the girls they killed follow. When Woodham (Mississippi, 1997) was asked why he stabbed his mother to death and then killed his ex-girlfriend and her best friend, Woodham answered that he was distraught over his breakup with his girlfriend, Christina Menefee. "I wasn't aiming at anyone else," he said (Barboza, 2000). Greg Eklund, lead investigator of the Rankin County Sheriff's Department, said it was the leader of Woodham's group, Grant Boyette, who encouraged Woodham. Boyette allegedly told him to stop whining about Christina and "just kill her and be done with it, so you won't have to see her again," he said (Montgomery, 1997). In Kentucky (1997) Michael Carneal's first shot killed Nicole Hadley, a girl who sat next to him in band practice and with whom he sometimes studied in her home after school. Although it was not mentioned at the time, Jonah Blank reported that she was the object of Carneal's unrequited love. Her mother Gwen Hadley confirmed this, "he was in love with my daughter Nicole, and Nicole had no interest in him," she said. Carneal telephoned Nicole nightly in the weeks before the shooting (Blank, 1998). His classmates testified that not having a girlfriend was a source of frustration and social embarrassment for him. After killing Hadley, Carneal killed two other girls who played beside him in the band (Blank, 1998).

Just four months later in Arkansas (1998) Mitchell Johnson "vowed to kill all the girls' who had broken up with him." *The New York Times* reported the word around school was that "Mitchell was mad because 11-year-old Candace Porter 'dumped him.'" Some said she teased him and called him names implying she found him unattractive (New York Times, "News Summary," Metropolitan Desk, 1998, 2). Porter was among the people targeted in the shooting. Andrew Golden, age 11, was also recently rejected

by his girlfriend, Jennifer Jacobs, before he joined Mitchell Johnson in the Arkansas (1998) shooting (Ibid.). All five people Johnson and Golden killed were female: four girls and a pregnant teacher; of the wounded students, nine out of ten were girls.

Kipland Kinkel (Oregon 1998) also struggled over his infatuations with girls; it was a growing source of despair. Referring to a girl he liked, Kipland said, “Every time I talk to her, I have a small – of hope- (sic) then she will tear it right down. My heart is breaking. I need help. There is one person who could help, but she won’t. I love her, but she could never love me. I don’t know why I try” (PBS, Frontline, 1999).

Klebold (Colorado 1999) was so shy with girls that his parents paid him \$250.00 to attend the Columbine High School Prom (Belluck and Wilgoren, 1999). Another student who considered himself one of Klebold’s best friends said that Klebold had not asked a girl on a date since one turned him down freshman or sophomore year. Finally, Robyn Anderson, the girl who purchased the guns for Harris and Klebold, persuaded Klebold to go to the prom with her, just as friends. Three different girls rejected Harris’ proposal to go to the prom. He showed up alone at an all-night casino party afterwards (Ibid.).

On May 20, 1999, exactly one month after the Columbine shootings, Thomas Solomon, age 15, wounded six students at his high school in Atlanta, Georgia. He stated that he was suicidal, and angry that his girlfriend had broken up with him after two years (Associated Press, “Profile of Georgia School Gunmen,” 1999). They had just had a serious argument the day before the shooting, and the couple had been struggling generally, one of Solomon’s friends reported (Firestone, 1999). Solomon also believed

his girlfriend was interested in the “jock” that teased him, Jason Cheek; the boy Solomon shot twice in the leg (Cloud, “ Just A Routine School Shooting, 1999).

In Alaska (1996), Evan Ramsey’s girlfriend had broken-up with him prior to his shooting in February 1997 (Fainaru, 1998). Jacob Davis, age 18, shot his ex-girlfriend’s current boyfriend in another high profile shooting, in Tennessee, May 19, 1998.

That these boys felt rejected by girls was further complicated for them in cyberspace. Many of the boys who killed were considered “excessively” involved with computers and the Internet. Some were known as “hackers”. Perhaps they were trying to escape to a technological world where their perceived “weakness” might be less visible. Compensating for the lack of intimacy in their “real” lives and their inability to assert themselves against relentless abuse, these boys seemed to look for an alternative life. They may have thought it was only in this virtual community that they could make any impact at all. Their sense of inadequacy could be temporarily relieved with seemingly conventional masculine rewards in a dynamic game of Doom or Quake, played by at least five of the boys who killed (PBS Frontline, 1999 and Adams, Hall, and Malone, and Riley, 1998 and Hutchinson and Schwartzman 1999), where if victors, they could feel master of their universe. To add insult, it turns out that Harris and Klebold, for instance, failed even in the cyberworld. One of the only girls in The Trench Coat Mafia, Kristen Thiebault, said she played these games with them “all the time.” “Eric and Dylan always lost,” she said (Wilgoren, “Society of Outcasts Began with a \$99 Coat,”1999). They were particularly upset when they were beaten by girls, she added, an indignity that certainly didn’t help their efforts to develop a stalwart manhood endowed with increasingly high expectations. Their complex feelings of powerlessness seemed to

motivate them to use violence-- and in particular guns-- to reinstate a stronger sense of masculinity.

In *Theorizing Masculinities*, Michael Kaufman writes that developing masculinity often means suppressing needs and emotions. These feelings do not disappear: "they are simply held in check or not allowed to play as full a role in our lives as would be healthy for ourselves and those around us," he writes (Kaufman, 1995, 148). It is not surprising, then, that boys both involved and uninvolved with the shootings make efforts to maintain such hard, unemotional "masculine" personae. For example, one eight-year-old boy who escaped the shooting in Arkansas (1998) was asked if he was scared. He responded proudly, "Everybody in my class started crying. But, me, I thought my lord, why're they all crying?" (Braun and Moehringer, 1998). While there could be other explanations, the eight year-old seemed to be trying to convey that he was "manly" enough not to cry when his friends were literally shot and killed before his eyes. Carneal (Kentucky 1997) also struggled with these conflicts. One of his classmates commented that Carneal "wouldn't show his emotions to people very often except for occasions when he would break down and cry or something" (Adams and Malone, 1999). Like the other victim-turned-killers, Carneal seemed compelled to take the abuse "like a man," though in truth the pain had become too much. Woodham (Mississippi 1998) made a point of tallying the specific abuses he endured before the massacre, believing the murderous act would redeem him. He demanded that people perceive him as powerful and manly. "I am not spoiled or lazy, for murder is not weak and slow-witted. Murder is gutsy and daring," he said (Moehringer, "Tales of Teen Murder Plot Terrify Mississippi Town," 1997.). Woodham denies his needs in favor of the omnipotence he believes "manhood" entails.

This extreme division of gender attributes is exponentially magnified in the South where most of these school shootings took place. Boys in the South, according to Richard Nisbett, register physiologically higher adrenaline reactions to attacks on their masculinity, than do those in the North. In the South, the polarities between masculinity and femininity, and the pressures towards extreme manifestations of these attributes are that much more extreme (Nisbett, 1996).

Kyle Velte in the *American Jurist* maintains that it is as if violence against women is an acceptable fact calling for resignation rather than transformation. She mentions a judge in Baltimore, Maryland, who excused a man who shot his wife in Washington, D.C. when he caught her with another man. He said, "I seriously wonder how many married men would have the strength to walk away...without inflicting some corporal punishment." Another man who stabbed and killed his wife during a marital break-up in January 1995 was released from custody when the judge decided he posed no threat to society (Velte, 1998). Connell's argument that men use violence "to sustain their dominance over women," sometimes rationalizing "murder by a women's patriarchal owner," emerges visibly here.

The FBI calls violent attacks by men the number one threat to the health of American women (Velte, 1998). Yet, contemporary responses to the school shootings ignore this well-documented phenomenon. Alvin Poussaint, one of the few people addressing the fact that the boys' victims were girls, reflects a typical perspective; that such hatred and murderous impulses towards females are considered normal. When asked if he considered the violence in Arkansas (1998) a misogynist crime, Poussaint said: "It is not unusual for boys in this age group to have antagonistic relations with girls.

The older boy felt rejected by a girl. So his anger was personal, but then generalized to all girls. He saw girls, more than boys, as the villain" (Velte, 1998). Whether intentionally or not, Poussaint's comments help to legitimize the hostility he says boys "normally" feel towards girls.

That homophobia, fear of homosexuality, and misogyny, hatred for women, are contemporary components of *normal* socialized masculinity is cause for concern, in and of itself. In addition, the normality of violence and domination is also an integral component of this gender identification. Social expectations for internalizing so much hate, violence, and fear is bad enough, but the method of imposing these social norms is also devastating. The next section addresses the *normality of violence*, and the accompanying *violence of normality*.

The Violence of Normality and the Normality of Violence

Boys will be Boys

Misogyny and homophobia have become commonplace components of masculinity, contributing to the *normality of violence* that is subsequently rendered invisible. Violence is then, also, embedded in the social construction of masculine expectations. The mechanisms that enforce these gender expectations, however, are violent as well. The boys who killed were violently attacked for appearing feminine, socially pressured, through these tactics, to conform to more typical masculinity expectations. The boys who killed clearly used violence to finally prove that they achieved these expectations so demanded of them. Thus, *the violence of normality* takes physically violent forms, but it also takes symbolic forms. Expectations to hate femininity and homosexuality manifest as self-hate. Men, who are necessarily more complex than the absolute masculinity they are pressured towards, are victims of a narrow discourse stifling fuller human expression. This section engages the intersection between these social institutions.

In *The New York Times*, Thomas L. Friedman depicts these two orientations, the *normality of violence* and the *violence of normality*. The passage below is one of many similar depictions of the boys' violent acts and fantasies. Conclusions consistently report that prior to their shootings, despite their violent tendencies, the boys were completely, "normal."

The shootings in Littleton were not by deprived youths, and they were not carried out by an obviously depraved single gunman, who could be written off as a psycho. Rather they happened in a "Leave it to Beaver" neighborhood, and the gunmen were Wally and Eddy Haskell (Friedman, 1999).

This comment conveys that Harris and Klebold were normal, even as they had arsenals of bombs and guns in their bedrooms, made videos of their intentions to shoot-up the school, and often shouted “Heil Hitler”--the normality of violence. The reference to *Leave it to Beaver* (a fifties sit-com depicting oppressive social norms as a necessary component of the successful family) also represents the violence of normality. The boys specifically implicated the *Leave it to Beaver* cultural norm as a motivating factor for their shooting.

Harris and Klebold made videos where they pretended to kill athletes in the school hallway (Wilgoren. “Society of Outcasts Began with a \$99 Coat,” 1999). A junior at Columbine High School, Erik Veik, said he saw two or three such videos that portended what was to come (MSNBC Staff and Wire Reports, “Note From Gunmen Warns of More Violence To Come,” 1999). Yet friends and acquaintances considered Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold typical boys. The *New York Daily News* reported that the town's perceptions that the “horrificing slaughter hardly squares with the eerily normal lives of the teens blamed for one of the worst crimes in United States history” (Hutchinson and McCoy, 1999). Though it was well known that the boys idolized Hitler, spoke of blowing up the school, and had homemade bombs visible in their bedrooms, a “boys will be boys” ideology seemed capable of rationalizing even these extreme fantasies of violence.

Luke Woodham (Mississippi 1997) spoke of guns, torturing animals, and his own rage. No one was alarmed by his comments. “Kids talk. That’s all I can say. Kids talk a lot,” said one resident in Mississippi. Another added, “Just talking, just threats, just

trying to be big and bad (Cabell, 1997). After Arkansas (1998) recall Richard Rodriguez's opinion piece for the *Los Angeles Times* asserting that boys doing cruel things to other children is perfectly normal.

Because guns are an accepted part of life in all of these suburban and rural communities, especially among the boys' fathers, the boys' fascination with them did not cause much alarm. For instance, Carneal (Kentucky 1997) was not considered a "gun enthusiast," by his former girlfriend even though she had seen him with a gun in school (Blank, 1998). She said: "He was trying to sell it, not use it, that's why no one told a teacher." Later on, she elaborated: "It's not like he hadn't brought a gun to school before. OK?" (Adams and Malone, 1999). Carneal was not perceived as obsessed with guns because people seemed to expect that boys would be fascinated with guns and might bring them to school. In fact many students at Heath High School reported that Carneal had been threatening to shoot up the school (Adams, "Teen-agers Ever-Changing Stories Frustrated Police, 1998). No one took him seriously. He was also known to download material about death and violence (Adams, 1999, "Outsider's Destructive Behavior Spiraled Into Violence"). When President Clinton visited West Paducah, Kentucky in August 1996, Carneal told his friend, Toby Nace, in front of Nace's parents, that he wanted to "shoot the president" (Adams, "Outsider's Destructive Behavior Spiraled Into Violence," 1998). Even after the fact, he was described emphatically as a "normal, freshman, student," by his teachers, neighbors, and peers (Adams, "Outsider's Destructive Behavior Spiraled Into Violence," 1998). Jonah Blank, U.S. news reporter, said Carneal was "hardly different from millions of kids across America" (Blank, 1998).

Carneals' friends insisted that certain kids were teased and humiliated "all the time" (Ibid.). Most kids seemed to think this was normal too.

Before his shooting, Johnson (Arkansas 1998) told another student, Dustin Cambell, (age 13), that: "Everyone that hates me, everyone I don't like is going to die." Charles Vancuan, another student, reported Mitchell's promises: "That all the people who broke up with him, you know, he was going to come to school and shoot them" (News Summary, *The New York Times Metropolitan Desk*, 1998). Johnson told his ex-girlfriend, Candace Porter, that he was going to kill her. In fact many students heard these rumors, but no one thought it particularly disturbing or unusual. "I thought he was just talking big and bad," said Emma Pittman, a sixth grader (Ibid.). Johnson had a fascination with violence that was known throughout the school. He told people he was a member of the Bloods ---a dangerous nation-wide gang--but again, no one took him seriously (Ibid.). "(Johnson) seemed normal," said the Church pastor, Tim Johnson.

Like most of the others convicted for school shootings, Kinkel (Oregon 1998) also made his obsession with violence, guns, and bombs evident. He brought a gun to school the day before the shooting. He demonstrated how to build a bomb with a timing device in one class, and told his literature class of his plans to "shoot everybody." No one took him seriously (Egan, "Oregon Student Held in 3 Killings; One Dead, 23 Hurt," 1998). Other students said he often made threats about building bombs or committing violence (Ibid.). These comments were often made even though he was voted most likely to start World War III in the school yearbook the last year and he often talked about torturing animals (Bernstein, "Silenced Grief Finds A Voice," 1999). His father found a trunk in Kinkel's room that included a sawed-off shotgun and a .22 pistol. His father

confiscated the guns, but he still bought his son the gun he longed for on his birthday later that year (Bernstein, "Kinkel's Boyhood Troubles Explode in Rage, Destruction," 1999). Kinkel's tendency towards violence and bombing was also considered normal. Jamon Kent, the Springfield Superintendent said Kinkel was "an average, everyday kind of kid." For a boy his age, Kent continued, Kinkel's temper and gun obsession were "a typical kid response" (Egan, "Oregon Freshman Goes To Court As Number of Deaths Rises to 4," 1998). One of the other students, Chrystie Cooper (age 15), described Kinkel as a common type in the community, he's a "country boy who liked to blow things up," she said. A PBS film narrating Kipland Kinkel's young life, remarked: "perhaps nothing could be more frightening than that unremarkable past. Witnesses saw "no signs of a killer in their midst" (PBS, Frontline, 1999).

When Eric Harris (Colorado 1999) wrote an essay portraying himself as a shotgun shell, his English teacher became alarmed and informed his father, Wayne Harris.

However, according to Marilyn Saltzman, spokesperson for the Jefferson County Public Schools, the teacher decided the essay reflected a normal interest "consistent with his future career aspirations" once she learned that Mr. Harris was a retired Air Force officer and that Eric was trying to join the military (Brooke, "Teacher of Colorado Gunmen Alerted Parents," 1999). One can only imagine what else is considered typical in this context.

Mark E. Manes, accused of providing Harris and Klebold (Colorado 1999) with one of the semiautomatic pistols in the Colorado case, provided a similar defense. His lawyer, Robert L. Ransome, insisted that when Manes accompanied the boys on three shooting expeditions, it did not mean he knew the boys were capable of this kind of

behavior. "When you're up shooting in the woods with a bunch of kids who love to shoot at things, the obvious assumption is, 'Hey, they like guns and they like to shoot.'" Ransome continued indignantly, "He never got to the point of thinking what they might do with it. It never crossed his mind" (Shore, 1999). Now we need to ask: Why is it a foregone conclusion that boys "love to shoot?"

In all these cases people claimed the boys were "conventionally" violent. As Mrs. Bowles, a mother of five in the Colorado community put it, the trench coat owners were "just like any other young men, interested in bamboo sword fights, *Star Wars*, and computer games" (Wilgoren, "Society of Outcasts," 1999). All the families of the boys who killed were hailed as normal and healthy by their neighbors, and other members of their communities (See Appendix).

What did it mean to be "normal" in the communities where these boys killed? The standards popular in these environments may expose how common sense became nonsensical. It seems that absolute conformity and emotional repression were considered among the most highly respected behaviors. For instance, Mark Mayerstein shared a duplex with the Harris family in Oscado, Michigan. "You just can't do anything that's aberrant or unlikely without someone finding out about it," he said: "We never even heard the kids cry." It raises some concern that a family should never be "aberrant" or that the kids shouldn't cry. Other neighbors of the Harris' called them a "quiet, normal, family." Another acquaintance referred to Eric's father as a "Leave it to Beaver Dad."

Judging from some of the comments made by Harris' peers, the pressure to be like everyone else was enormous. "If the majority of people were as open-minded as my friends Dylan and Eric, this probably would never have happened," said the only female

Trench Coat mafia member, Kristen Thiebault. As if in agreement, 17-year-old Kevin Koeniger, a junior on Columbine's Rebels Football team, said, "If they're different, why wouldn't we look at them as weird?" (Wilgoren, "Society of Outcasts Began with a \$99 Coat," 1999). Another student, Ben Oakley agreed, "They're freaks," he said. "They were in the Trench Coat Mafia and that's something around our school that we consider freaks" (Cullen, "The Rumor That Won't Go Away," 1999). These social expectations enforce disciplinary codes--no one knows anyone else, an illusion of happiness masks widespread alienation, emotional experience is disrespected, and boys who cry risk becoming pariahs. Here the *violence of normality* is visible; harassment and disrespect of the "other" emerges as a commonplace institution.

This seemed to be Harris' major complaint. Recall again the "manifesto" he left in his room (capital in original):

SURELY YOU WILL TRY TO BLAME IT ON THE CLOTHES I WEAR, THE MUSIC I LISTEN TO, OR THE WAY I CHOOSE TO PRESENT MYSELF - BUT NO. DO NOT HIDE BEHIND MY CHOICES. YOU NEED TO FACE THE FACT THAT THIS COMES AS A RESULT OF YOUR CHOICES. PARENTS AND TEACHERS, YOU F***ED UP (sic).
 YOU HAVE TAUGHT THESE KIDS TO BE GEARS AND SHEEP.
 TO THINK AND ACT LIKE THOSE WHO CAME BEFORE THEM, TO NOT ACCEPT WHAT IS DIFFERENT. YOU ARE IN THE WRONG. I MAY HAVE TAKEN THEIR LIVES AND MY OWN - BUT IT WAS YOUR DOING (Harris, 1999).

Harris specifically attacks the enforced conformity--the *violence of normality*. After the Columbine massacre, many young people confirmed the school's social divisions that Harris described here. Senior Eddie Olson said he knew he was in the enemy camp, and he was upset that he ran to safety when other students took the bullets that were meant for him. "I'm sorry I ran out of there when I was part of the group being targeted," he said (Cobb, 1999). Olson wished he had embodied the "take it like a man" perspective. He

seemed to think he should have been “brave” like a man, rather than recognizing the wisdom in getting out of such a dangerous situation.

Normality in these communities also meant Christian observance and regular attendance at Church. Neighbors defended each boy and his family by claiming they attended Church like any other normal, American family. This barometer of normality may also have contributed to the boys’ alienation. Klebold’s family, for instance, was Jewish. His mother was Jewish and his grandfather, Leo Yassenoff, was a well-known philanthropist who gave so much money to the local Jewish community center that it was named for him. In public, Klebold’s family attended a Lutheran Church, and Dylan attended confirmation classes. At home, the family observed the Jewish rituals. This public-private split may have been another source of shame and confusion for Klebold (Belluck and Wilgoren, 1999).

This type of pressure constitutes another form of the violence of normalization, more insidious and invasive than even the direct harassment the boys experienced on a daily basis. As Michel Foucault writes: “It (power) is the name we give to a complex strategic situation in a particular society” (Foucault, 1995, 184). Kipland Kinkel (Oregon 1998) said he killed his parents to save them from the shame they would experience in front of their peers when they learned he was arrested for bringing a gun to school. He was aware that being deviant or aberrant was unacceptable, and he seemed to perceive it as comparable to death for his parents, so he took their lives instead. Kinkel’s best friend, Tony McCowan, confirmed this motivation. He said Kipland was extremely worried about how being suspended and arrested would shame the family (Egan, “Oregon Student Held in 3 Killings; One Dead, 23 Hurt,” 1998).

The power structures in these schools and communities imposed distorted social norms through various apparatus. The boys who killed fell short of these standards, and they seemed to feel they were in constant danger of being despised and ostracized. The boys who killed ultimately fought back by trying to break the bonds of power that were visible--the dominance of the "preps and jocks" in the school. What they tried and failed to tackle was the ideology itself that controlled, contained, and denigrated them. This was a cultural hegemony shared by their peers, teachers, parents, and other adults in their lives. In relationship to this machinery--the same mechanisms that ultimately permeate and pressure the "preps and jocks"-- the boys who killed remained inextricably tied.

To unravel the power dynamics among multiple social structures requires among other things, examining gender expectations, and mainstream social relations. The boys who killed trapped themselves between oppositional choices. Against Christianity, they turned to Satan--against social humiliation, they idealized Hitler--and against the "preps and jocks" who tormented them, they picked up guns.

The next section addresses the pervasiveness of this binary orientation that infuses distorted social relations. As the boys were tried, and generally sentenced to life in prison, focus on these boys as individual "bad seeds" obscures the larger social analysis this thesis seeks to generate. Since they were mostly tried in adult courts, the society that helped form them was not just absolved, but continued to be complicit in reifying these binary divisions, and supporting these same socialization processes. In courts that were made hyper-masculine, as William Bennett writes, to avoid a pervasive phobia of what he calls a potentially "effeminate" prison system (Currie, 1998), the boys became scapegoats

themselves for a culture steeped in denial, still refusing self-reflection, critique, and social and economic transformation.

CHAPTER FIVE: CULTURAL AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

American Heroes

The masculinity expectations and conflicts the boys who killed battled in their suburban schools are pervasive. The dictum to look and act tough and to beat the enemy is depicted in most media, cultural norms and rituals, as well as private families. As masculinity expectations increase, and expectations for larger, more muscular bodies proliferate, the most popular icons have become increasingly less human. Human fallibilities are no longer acceptable in most popular heroes. Once the pastime of young “geeky” boys, there is a recent outpouring of comic book heroes in Hollywood film including *Spiderman* (2002), *The Hulk* (2003), and *Daredevil* (2002). Each of these heroes had a mental power versus physical power dichotomy. When Spiderman is not leaping between buildings like a spider, he is a brilliant student, a “nerd” in school, and scientifically astute. The Hulk, a huge, muscle bound creature of mammoth proportions is just a skinny, brilliant, and extremely lonely scientist when he is a regular man. Daredevil is a successful lawyer by day, and because he is blind, he walks around with a cane, exaggerating his disability. As the Daredevil--being blind becomes his strength--he has super radar sight, and all his other senses are hyper-powerfully astute. Daredevil also obsessively weight lifts and trains as a gymnast, developing a physical strength he only displays in costume as the Daredevil.

In each archetype, the superhero is two people. He is not a complicated, fallible human with strengths and weaknesses, but a conflicted soul enjoying his great powers as a powerful creature, and *feigning* weakness as a mortal. In some sense—the geek (mind)

transformed to super hero (physical) is a mirror of the “geek” versus “prep and jock” conflicts existing in suburban high schools. The fantasy for the boys who killed may have been that in addition to their greater intelligence—as a superhero, they could beat the “jocks” at their own game.

The “normal” less powerful person is consistently made more “man” and less “human” in the transformed heroic form. The binary division between weak and fallible and powerful and infallible is repeatedly depicted in these figures. The boys who killed were picked-on and teased and called homosexual in their mundane human lives. By picking-up guns they became what they seemed to believe was a form of superhero for that one moment. The cultural emphasis on competition, winning, deploring the loser and even shunning those who come in second is metamorphosed in these fantasy figures.

Thus, the boys who killed, like these superheroes, may have believed they could either be smart or they could be physically powerful, but they could not be both simultaneously, and they could not be anything less than “the best.” These are binaries inherent in masculinity expectations, and our culture is structured around this mentality in many ways that propagate these schemas. A number of interesting and yet typical representations of these conceptual and masculinity dilemmas are depicted in the recent futuristic film. *Minority Report*, a revealing text for highlighting the omnipresence of binary divisions. The following ideas are communicated in this film:

1. Men are physically powerful; Women are intuitively powerful.
2. There are good guys and bad guys; you’re one or the other.
3. You can buy advertised products or you can have/be nothing.

4. Good crime policy means you can either lock away innocent people in an effort to catch all the guilty people or accept a high crime rate and mediocre prevention.
5. There is either a universal theory or complete chaos.

Like the film adaptation of Philip K. Dick's book that became *Bladerunner*, the futuristic film, *Minority Report*, magnifies dynamics in contemporary culture that reveal insight into the sociological conditions of the present. The year is 2054. Tom Cruise plays Jonathan, a lead cop in the *Pre-Crime* division. This new technology keeps three prescient *precogs* floating in water, recording their thoughts on a big screen as they warn of imminent murders. Jonathan's team then sweeps into the moment before the homicide occurs, and arrests the person "for the murder he is about to commit". The *precogs* are always right, they believe, and so even without committing the crime itself, the person is rendered guilty and put away for what s/he is about to do. As a result of *Pre-crime* efficacy, there hadn't been a murder in the country for six years.

The political climate changes however, and the *Pre-crime* unit is in jeopardy. Jonathan learns that there is sometimes a *Minority Report* that predicts a different outcome than the murder perceived by the other two *precogs*. This discovery reveals that Jonathan and his team have been arresting and putting away people who were potentially innocent--who might never have committed the murder at all. The revelation of this possibility and the plot twist that implicates Jonathan himself in an imminent murder, leads Jonathan to kidnap the most powerful *precog*, Agatha, and try to find the *Minority Report* that would prove his innocence. The five binaries mentioned above are extrapolated below.

1. Men are physically powerful; Women are intuitively powerful.

Tom Cruise as Jonathan does the typical Cruise routines. He leaps from the top of moving cars, evades certain death through his ingenuity, wins every physical fight, and triumphs in the end: masculinity victory. By day Jonathan was a skilled cop at *Pre-Crime*, but he wasn't able to display his true physical powers until he was forced to become the superhero that exposed *Pre-Crime*.

The lead woman is Agatha, the *precog*. Her power is in her intuition, and in her ability to support and help Jonathan. In one memorable chase scene, she deftly navigates a huge mall, a typically female arena. She knows they need an umbrella because it will be raining when they leave and she knows when the nice man with the balloons will walk by just so he blocks the enemies' sight. The scenes are reminiscent of traditionally prescribed gender dynamics: women remind their partners and children to dress appropriately for the weather, and are expected to be more confident and experienced at navigating a mall. The film depicts these qualities as starkly masculine and feminine avoiding the complexities inherent in humans generally. For the boys who killed these are the kind of divisions that relegated them to the "feminine" sphere. Because they were not athletic and capable of super masculinity feats, and because their strengths were more related to the mind, they were considered "feminine," and they felt pressured to demonstrate Cruise-type prowess.

2. There are good guys and bad guys; you're one or the other.

As a story, the film teases the audiences concerning who is a good guy and who is a bad guy. In the beginning the lines are drawn one way, but as the plot thickens new

portraits are portrayed, and the audience quickly changes allegiances. For instance the investigator working for the Attorney General is initially hostile to Jonathan and the *Pre-crime* program--the bad guy—but, when it is revealed that the politician to whom both he and Jonathan report is actually a manipulative murderer himself out for his own political gain, he immediately wins the audience sympathy as viewer hostility is re-directed at this politician. The old trope that politicians are all power-hungry, unethical, and devoid of core values is another binary the film entertains. The potential for humans to act both badly and well is not suggested, a complexity that tends to be absent from most media re-presentations. That the boys who killed perceived their massacres as a means of receiving respect recalls this duality. They perceived themselves as perpetual weak pariahs--*the bad guys*, and fought to have some version of what they thought was good masculine power in their distorted hopes of becoming *the good guys*.

3. You can buy advertised products or you can have/be nothing.

Here, the film is more ironic. Referencing how the highly refined science of advertising successfully targets increasingly specific demographics, the commercials depicted in *Minority Report* personally address each individual consumer. Recognizing the customer by his eyes, the ads uses sophisticated technology to call the consumer by name. “Hello Mr. Anderson, How do you like the tank top you bought last time?” Recall Rifkin’s thesis that contemporary advertisers try to create the illusion of a relationship with the consumer, seducing him or her into feeling connected with the individual corporation. The irony in this film is that it *is actually* advertising these popular commodities. *American Express* and *The Gap* probably paid dearly to act as the

advertising agents in the film. And yet, the film was also mimicking this phenomenon, portraying it as a disturbed *Brave New World* or 1984 dystopia. The film then itself questioned consumer preoccupation inside the text, even as it further propagates it by running these ads for big corporations. The binary is clear. There is no life without consumerism; the future will bring increasingly fetishized commodities and will co-opt consumer interests; there is no alternative. My earlier concern about the market of Hilfiger or Manson is revealed here. The power of corporations to commodify mainstream interests as well as its resistance is evident in this depiction of corporate power and influence.

4. Good crime policy means you can either lock away innocent people in an effort to have a full-proof plan to capture all guilty people or accept a high crime rate and mediocre prevention.

In the end, Jonathan opposes the *Pre-Crime* program and supports the political opposition against it. The binary mentality inherent in this decision is immediately obvious. Are there no other choices besides potentially putting away innocent people and preventing all murders, and the reinstatement of more mundane, less efficacious criminology tactics? The question seems to be a comment on the current political climate. In New York City, Mayor Guillian had people arrested for “quality of life” crimes--the broken-window theory. The idea is that people who commit petty crimes are more likely to do harder crimes as well. If all these people are punished and put through the system, there is a greater likelihood of getting the harder criminals.

As a result of these kinds of policies nation-wide, there are currently between 6-7 million people in the United States criminal justice system: 1.4 million in prison, 600,000

in jail, 700,000 people on parole, and 4 million people on probation. In the United States, 1/3 of all black men ages 16-28 are in some part of the criminal justice system. In Baltimore and Washington D.C. 50% of young black men are in the system. A black child born this year has a 28% chance of going to prison (Jacobson, Former NYC Probation and Corrections Commissioner, Interview; 8 May 2002). Crime is down nationwide says the FBI and U.S. Department of Justice Statistics, but at what cost? The film seems to be critical of this policy.

The happy-ending in *Minority Report* is a return to higher crime without the arrest of potentially innocent people. There is no discussion of alternatives. What if *Pre-Crime* units prevented potential murders from occurring, but did not put these people away? What if there were social services that were rendered, or new support systems administered that might help both the potential aggressor and the potential victim? These options do not exist in the film, and since the 1970's dismantling of rehabilitation programs, they barely exist today either. Eerily, this dichotomy is present in the school shooting phenomena as well. The boys who killed believed they had no options. They had asked for help and the bullying continued. There was no rehabilitative program to prevent "preps and jocks" from exercising their greater power and strength over these smaller boys. These boys felt they had to take matters into their own hands, and fighting to the death as an oppositional resistance on the same masculinity terms as the "preps and jocks" displayed was what they perceived as their only choice.

5. *There is either a universal theory or complete chaos.*

Finally, the film ends with another ironic twist. Chaos and crime have been chosen over the predetermined technology that might convict innocent people. It is better not to know, and allow humans their fallibility. Homicides will reappear; some will be punished and others will be missed, and few will be averted, but innocent people will no longer be convicted. The film seems to be trumpeting human chaos against a technologically predetermined sterile future. And yet, the film ends with the oldest trope in fiction. When Chekov displays a loaded gun in Scene I of *The Seagull*, it must go off at some point in the play. It has come to be axiomatic that a work should answer every question it raises, and if a gun is presented, it must fire (Gardner, 1983). *Minority Report* uses this rule almost playfully. The *good guy turned bad guy* is publicly honored and presented with a miniature gold gun with gold bullets, congratulating him for his success in perfecting *Pre-crime*, the institution finally condemned by the end of the film. Thus, it was hardly surprising that the gold gun went off at the end of the film, the *good guy turned bad guy* committed suicide, the *real* good guys were absolved, and the story was complete. The country could be safe in the “human” rather than the high-technology world and a new universal theory was born. Thus the film implied that even in the critique of perfection, new types of perfection are necessary. Efforts to create universal theories with binary structures predominate.

The film also teases issues relating to natural human traits versus technology. One could only enter the *Pre-Crime* if the surveillance machines recognized their natural born eyes. This was also the method through which large advertising billboards were able to seduce each consumer by name. The implication is that if technology depends on the *natural immutable human traits* it will always be accurate. But part of Jonathan’s

power in the film is that he is able to find an underground surgeon to remove his eyes and give him the eyes of another person. Now the ads will call him by another name, and he can escape undetected in high surveillance areas. By carrying his original eyes with him in a small bag—he can also enter high security places with his previous security clearance. The implication is that the *natural human traits* are indeed *mutable* with technology. The film tries to use humanity to trump technology—but it is through technology (the switching of the eyes) that the liberation is finally acquired. “The liberation of man is never assured by the institutions and laws that are intended to guarantee them... almost all these laws and institutions are quite capable of being turned around. Not because they are ambiguous, but simply because ‘liberty’ is what must be exercised,” writes Foucault (Foucault, 1993 162). Foucault conveys that it is not possible to pit humanity against technology in a binary war as this film depicts. Individual and collective exercise of liberty is possible only in relationship to a given structure, not independent of it.

In some way the boys who killed perceived a war between human ability and technology as well. In the film the faux victor was humanity, among the boys who killed it was technology. They gave up on their own physical abilities and turned to powerful weapons that would insure them the power they lacked and craved. Like the film they perceived themselves and seemed to be perceived within binary choices. They could be human or superhero, powerful or weak, popular or pariah, mainstream or freak, masculine or feminine. They perceived few choices and all of them seemed to feel they had become the bad side of the binary: feminized freaks and pariahs in the context of the school. There was no room for difference of other kinds. By picking-up guns, they

seemed to think they would get more respect (See Appendix). They thought they would be more popular, and they would prove their masculinity once and for all. Without a longer continuum of all these qualities, the boys who killed felt they had no options. In the end they were given no options again. While in another era they might have been charged in juvenile court and entered rehabilitative programs, today they were charged as adults and almost all imprisoned for life. From *Get Tough* criminal policy, they became victims again of the masculinity binaries and expectations they were trying so hard to achieve.

Policy Implications

Minority Report summarizes some of the cultural binary conflicts addressed in this dissertation as well as the comparable criminal responses that develop from these binary paradigms.

Many of the political responses to the school shootings also followed this paradigm. There are individual lawsuits by the victims of the boys who killed against the parents of the perpetrators, as well as against gun manufacturers, the entertainment industry, and other implicated institutions. The surviving boys who killed have been sentenced to multiple-life imprisonment, except in one case in Arkansas 1998 when an 11-year-old and 14-year old were kept in juvenile court. New policies including the death penalty for younger children, as well as prohibitions against trench coats and book bags have also been instituted (Brooke, "Attack At School Planned A Year, Authorities Say," 1999). Culture more generally, however, has not been charged. Rehabilitation models have not been discussed which might potentially address the rage these boys

experienced, and afford the opportunity to understand from where and whence it came. Conceptually the social construction of masculinity and the abusive school status-hierarchies have not been overhauled. This chapter charts many of the responses thus far implemented.

A number of lawsuits were initiated after each school shooting. After the Kentucky (1997) incident, the parents of the three students who were killed at Heath High School filed a \$130 million lawsuit against the entertainment industry. They insisted that it was the media violence that inspired the boy who shot their children, and they sued two Internet porn sites, several computer companies, and the makers and distributors of a 1995 film featuring Leonardo Di Caprio in *The Basketball Diaries*. Kayce Steger's mother, Sabrina Steger, told reporters: "We believe the Heath shooter was influenced by the movies he watched, the computer games he played and the Internet sites he visited including computer games: Doom, Quake, and Mortal Kombat" (Associated Press, "Media Companies Are Sued in Kentucky Shooting," 1999). Other parents of the victims also filed suits against his parents, several administrators, teachers and students.

There are nine lawsuits accusing the Jefferson County Sheriff's Department of mishandling the Columbine High School shootings (Black, 2000). The parents of the victims have won millions of dollars in lawsuits from the families of the boys who killed (The Associated Press, "Columbine gunmen's parents offer settlement," 2000).

Get Tough

After each of the school massacres, new school, country, state, and federal policies were enacted in response to the horrific crimes. In Mississippi, a new law was passed making it a capital crime to kill on school property. It's called *Christy's law*, after Woodham's (Mississippi 1997) ex-girlfriend who he killed that day (Kasindorf, 1999). In West Paducah, Kentucky (1997) other types of efforts were made to prevent future school shootings, for instance, book bags and backpacks were entirely forbidden in an effort to prevent students from sneaking weapons into school. In Arkansas (1998), the death penalty was demanded for children as young as eleven years old, the age of the younger shooter (Verhovek, "Texas Legislator Proposes the Death Penalty," 1998). Gun control also became a major political issue after this shooting. Recall that one of the parents of the victims made gun control her mission, campaigning for any candidate that supported tighter gun-control laws (Dob, 1998). President Clinton called for zero-tolerance of guns at schools (McCurry, 1999).

After the massacre at Columbine High School in Colorado (1999), the shooting with the highest casualty rate to date, the most unlikely institutions capitulated to national and international demands for containment. Since the NRA gun show was held in Denver, Colorado, the NRA agreed (under some duress) to scale down its conference, from three days to one day (Slater and Hart, 1999). After extreme political pressure, Marilyn Manson also agreed to cancel his concert tour (Sterngold, 1999). President Clinton asked Hollywood, huge Democratic contributors, to decrease the level of violence in films. No one knew what would work, but everyone wanted something done. A bill was passed overwhelmingly in the House and Senate allowing states to publicly

display the Ten Commandments, and also to permit religious speech on public school campuses at memorials, without offending the U.S. Constitution (U.S. House of Representatives, “Protecting Our Children to Prevent Future Columbines”).

Policies, both measured and superficial, were enacted reflexively. The Law itself seemed to be at a major loss. It seems that impulsive policies like trench coat and bag prohibitions replaced a serious consideration of why violence was appearing more visibly in suburbs, a previously perceived safe zone. Efforts to intervene were simultaneously concealing this newly discovered fissure in the cultural landscape.

Violence prevention studies and programs still seem to focus almost exclusively on violence in urban areas, and the role of poverty, family disintegration, and substance abuse there. *The Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence Fact Sheet* on “Social Contexts and Adolescent Violence” focuses exclusively on “four types” of only “inner city violence” including *childhood aggression*, *gang violence*, *robbery*, and *dating violence* (“CSPV Fact Sheet,” 1999). The study accurately addresses issues in *childhood aggression* as “the establishment of one’s position in a dominancy hierarchy,” and within *gang violence* (group violence) the “exaggerated display of masculinity,” and within *dating violence*, “displays of domination or mastery.” These issues are clearly significant and increasingly visible issues in suburbs as well, but the reference to such high-risk behaviors in these communities is entirely absent. The possibility of similar violence occurring in suburbs is discarded in the first sentence of the study: “In the inner city. there are four types of violence common during childhood and adolescence...” (Ibid.)

In spite of the horrific violence in the suburbs, and the prolific discourse, there is still a misguided belief that: “It can’t happen here,” and that the problem is located in

some deviant “other.” In the United States, youth homicide is the only major cause of childhood deaths that has increased over the past three decades. While homicides among minority teens tripled between 1984 and 1993, youth homicide among whites, during that period, doubled. While the rate of the former is higher, the rate of the latter is still extreme and significant, and yet almost completely ignored in widespread youth violence prevention responses. Most homicides of youth are by other youth, not family members. The United States continues to be first among developed countries in homicides of juveniles. It claims the lives of more teenagers than any cause other than accidents. (Finkelhor, Ormrod, Department of Justice, OJJDP). Recall again-- today, homicide is the second leading cause of adolescent death (Spina, 2000, 1). Since 1993, the victimization and offending rate has declined for youth, but it still remains higher than levels seen in the mid-eighties. According to the U.S. Department of Justice, the offending rate for youth homicides between the ages of 18-24 years of age has historically been the highest and their rates doubled between 1985 and 1993. The rate for offending youth 14-17 years old, “exploded after 1985,” according to the same report, surpassing the rates of 25-34 year-olds and 35-49 year olds. The average age of offenders in 1976 was 31-years-old, whereas the average age in 1994 was 27-years-old. Homicide victims between the ages of 14-17 years old increased 150% between 1985-1993. (*U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics: “Homicide Trends in the United States, Age Trends”*). While the FBI widely reported that school violence decreased since 1993, the U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics suggests that to the while this is true, there are areas of school violence that have remained constant. Between 1993-1997, the percentage of students between the 9th-12th grades that were threatened with a

weapon on school property remained constant, and the number of physical fights was also the same (*U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics, "School Violence"*). At the American Psychological Association symposium on violence in 1999, Dr. Irwin Hyman of Temple University argued that while the overall rate of school violence has decreased, the use of automatic weapons in school shootings has increased. "The sheer number of media accounts about violence suggests the problem of school crime is much worse than it is," he reported (Volz, 2001).

The "can't happen here" perspective is discredited by the increasing suburban incidence of school shootings, and other forms of institutionalized violence like fraternity hazing, and sports fights. The U.S. Department of Justice says school shooting numbers "are too small to be labeled a trend" (U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, OJJDP: "Homicides of Children and Youth,"), in spite of their acknowledgement that since the 1992-1993 school year, there have been at least one multiple victim school homicide event each year. Their report notes that there were six events in 1997-1998, and mentions that this number declined to two events in 1998-1999. Absent from their study, however, is any recognition that the two events in 1998-1999 claimed more lives and caused more serious injuries of adolescents than any of the school shootings in past years combined (Oregon 1998 and Colorado 1999) (Ibid.). Without adequate analysis of these occurrences, and substantial intervention and cultural transformation, these studies and government programs serve only as another shield for cultural ills in desperate need of change.

Until this year, 2002, at Martin Luther King Jr. High School in New York City, when one male student shot two other students over a girl, multiple school shootings had

not occurred in urban areas at all, remaining exclusively the province of the suburbs.

Nevertheless, school violence is a problem in both urban and suburban areas. In New York City, there are an arsenal of anti-violence programs including widespread metal detectors, conflict resolution programs in every school, and traditional discipline measures including Deans initiating suspension, detention, and other prevention and intervention efforts.

Policies in New York City were quickly implemented in response to the high-profile school shootings occurring nation-wide; draconian correction procedures were enacted in an effort to prevent mass violence. In public schools, an articulated threat to kill other students mandates a call to the police, and the immediate removal of the student in handcuffs. In October 1999, in the school where I work, one student who also said he was part of a Satan cult, much like many of the boys who killed, confessed to one of my social work interns that he had "a compulsion to kill." He said he had problems with anger and he wanted help. This desperate plea was sadly lost, at least temporarily, by the emergency action now officially dictated by the NYC Board of Education in response to this kind of disclosure. When the Principal insisted I call the Manhattan Superintendent of Guidance, I was told by this authority to hang-up the phone, and call the police. The police brought the 15-year-old boy in handcuffs to the adolescent psychiatric division of Saint Vincent's Hospital, and the boy was transferred out of the school shortly thereafter. It was entirely unnecessary for the unarmed boy to be taken away in handcuffs or for four police to accompany him to the hospital. It is still unclear whether this incident amounted to a credible threat, or merely a young boy asking for a lot of help. The needs of the individual and the risk to the community are constantly in conflict, and the balance

is rarely well placed when external authorities intervene (Humanities Preparatory Academy: October 1999).

In April 2001, two years after the Columbine tragedy, tensions in my school, as in many schools across the country, were still palpable. “Two more days, two more days,” whispered one of the students in another social work intern’s conflict resolution class. This was a boy who dressed in black, and was known to idealize Nietzsche, much like many of the boys who killed. It was April 18, 2001. There was some discussion of school shootings prior to the comment. My intern was alarmed, and told me about the comment immediately following class. When I relayed the concern to our Principal, the parent of the boy was called.

It appeared at first that the Principal’s reaction was impulsive. At the parent conference, the boy indignantly explained that April 20th is Bob Marley’s birthday, not just Hitler’s birthday and the anniversary of the Colorado 1999 massacre. Ultimately, however, this boy had a poor defense. Bob Marley’s birthday is February 6th, not April 20th, as he indicated. Nonetheless, it would have been prudent to talk with him prior to the parent conference to explore these issues with more time and privacy before taking the intervention that ultimately further alienated him from school support structures, and also undermined the investigation. This boy, extremely resistant to counseling and support from the school, tried to commit suicide the following year. He clearly needed more help, and ultimately received it only when it was forced upon him by the hospital at this later date. My concern is that the mandated intervention to his initially perceived threat was detrimental to this boy who needed to be able to trust adults (Humanities Preparatory Academy, “Conflict Resolution Class,” April 18, 2001).

A third boy was asked to bring in his parent when he muttered to a teacher that he would blow-up the school if he failed his classes. At the meeting, he insisted that he wasn't serious. We had to explain that jokes or off-hand references must be taken seriously. It does seem necessary for students to understand that at this historical moment jokes referring to shooting and bombing are scary and severely inappropriate when tensions and fears still run high (Humanities Preparatory Academy, "Individual Intervention," January 2000).

Most recently two boys who were trying desperately to graduate against all odds (both in their sixth year of high school) got into legal and school trouble as a result of gay harassment, the common factor amongst almost all these cases. One boy allegedly "came on" to the second boy. The second boy called this first boy, homophobic names. Then, the first boy physically attacked the second boy. The first boy was arrested and spent time in jail. Both were expelled immediately. The issues between them were never resolved, and this kind of harassment, pain, retribution, and destructive consequences, continues in schools across the country. (I am trying to help both boys get equivalency diplomas, and go on to college with scholarships) (Humanities Preparatory Academy, "Principal Intervention," May 2002).

My experience in this school has shown me the virtual impossibility of routing out students who might commit school shootings. Zealous caution is as imperative as it is destructive, sadly building greater mistrust and disrespect between students and administrators. The people in the communities of the boys who killed can't be unilaterally blamed as individuals for allowing the violent culture to persist, or for missing the warning signs of the massacres to come. These people are also victims of a

misguided social culture. Instead, a re-evaluation of cultural norms and practices, and a transformation of gender expectations are imperative. It is not individuals that create social problems, but cultural norms that encourage increasingly disturbed behavior. Well thought out plans and processes also need to be implemented to address these difficulties more effectively.

In my inner-city school we have one of the lowest rates of violence in the New York City system. Without traditional discipline interventions including metal detectors, Deans, or even our own security officer, we try to prevent the outbreak of violence by addressing such social issues in all-school meetings called *Town Meetings*, and in smaller Advisories or homerooms. We discuss the importance of respecting people who are gay or feminine, and the emotional impact of name-calling, and bullying. Blatantly homophobic students state their prejudices, and also listen to other students who defend a fuller gender continuum. This year some gay students in the school produced and presented a video school-wide documenting the harassment they experience, both in our school and in the larger world, as a result of their sexual preference. The students who made the video facilitated a discussion following the presentation, and consciousness among the students was substantively raised (Humanities Preparatory Academy, "Student Presentation," 2001). In many ways, our school reaps the fruits of these labors. Cultural norms are often questioned and re-evaluated, and school violence is less common than in other New York City schools.

To the extent that we are successful in preventing some violence, we still battle a larger culture that ignores these issues and often encourages children to physically fight to protect their dignity, to defend their heterosexuality regardless of their preference, and

to demonstrate their masculine prowess. The shift in priorities needs to be widespread; routing out individuals who may or may not be capable of such atrocities is in the end impossible, and less effective than the still difficult task ahead of transforming the cultural field in which we interact.

The juvenile justice system reflects a disturbing proclivity, preventing the cultural self-reflection so badly needed. "Get Tough" policies are the norm, and rehabilitation and cultural transformation discourse is increasingly absent. Barry C. Feld in "The Juvenile Court" (Feld, 1998, 509) argues that juveniles (generally under the age of 18, but in some states, age 16) used to be treated differently as a result of their age. The Progressive Era reforms envisioned an informal court that intervened in the child's "best interests." Now juveniles are tried in adult courts for the most part. By the end of 1996, reported Hunter Hurst 3d, director of the National Center for Juvenile Justice, 49 states had passed laws authorizing the prosecution of sentencing as adults of 14-year olds" (Applebome, "No Room for Children in a World of Little Adults," 1998). In *re Gault*, 387 U.S. 1 (1967), the juvenile court was transformed such that it converged procedurally and substantively with adult criminal courts. As criminal social control began to supersede social welfare as a primary purpose of juvenile court sentences, focus moved from the youths' welfare and "real needs," to proving guilt, and meting out punishment.

This shift coincided with the extremely influential 1974 article by Robert Martinson titled: "What Works?" (Martinson, 1974). The article documents the rehabilitative program research until that time--for young people as well as adults-- and declared conclusively that they were not effective in reducing recidivism. Careful reading of the article, however, reveals some generalizations Martinson made that do not

make this conclusion so inevitable. For instance, he recognizes the efficacy of *insight therapy* but raises the concern that the particular therapists in the study were chosen specifically for their “empathy” and “non-possessive warmth.” He concludes that the success of that program might be related to those specific therapists as opposed to the program itself. In fact such qualities as empathy and non-possessive warmth are considered necessary, but not sufficient qualities of most good therapists, and should not be such an unusual phenomenon. Other programs Martinson recognized were cost-effective compared to the traditional prison alternatives, if not effective otherwise.

Since Martinson’s study, rehabilitation programs were replaced by and large by more traditional methods. Yet, Former Commissioner for New York City Department of Corrections (1995-1998) and Former Commissioner for New York City Department of Probation (1992-1996), Michael Jacobson says more recent research shows that these kinds of programs are extremely effective in reducing recidivism as well as cost-effective (Interview, Jacobson, May 8, 2002). Public policy continues to be of the *Get Tough* variety, independent of these conclusions, reflecting instead contemporary political proclivities and impulsive public reactions to high-profile cases. There is no other field in which there is such a “big disconnect between research and policy,” says Jacobson (Ibid.). Education and healthcare tend to reflect respective research studies, but criminal justice is most often generated from public opinion. For instance, the infamous Willie Horton who escaped parole when George Bush ran for President spurred a national demand to abolish parole altogether. No one says that if some students are illiterate when they graduate from high school, we should abolish high schools, or if a patient dies in a hospital, we should close the hospitals, says Jacobson. Yet if 1 out of a million criminal

cases become high profile, it spurs “unbelievable policy change,” says Jacobson.

Similarly there is veritable consensus in criminology research that a college education is directly proportional to reducing recidivism, and yet States are cutting their college programs as politicians decry programs that help criminals while average citizens still have to pay for school. Jacobson argues that while clearly all people should have a right to public education, there is still a public self-interest in keeping education in prisons regardless of this inequality. When these people are released from jail, education is the most likely indicator for preventing recidivism. Politicians are also often outraged about the fact that prisoners are the only people in the United States that have access to free health care. Jacobson argues again that it is in the public health interest to make sure these people are healthy, because on their release they pose a high risk for infecting others if they remain ill (Ibid).

Another extremely effective approach is “Multisystemic therapy” (MST), advocated most strongly by criminologist Elliot Currie. This intervention seems to offer the possibility for cultural change at least on a small-scale. MST is rooted in the belief that “individuals are nested within a complex of interconnected systems”--including family, peers, school, and beyond them, the broader community and its structure of opportunities and supports (Currie, 1998, 105). “Treatment” consists of dealing with issues that arise across all these multiple systems. It rejects the exclusive tendency to treat the individual, and emphasizes instead the relationship engaged with widespread institutions.

In spite of this positive research, traditional “Get Tough” policies remain the standard. Feld argues that juveniles actually receive fewer protections now, than the

minimum insisted upon for adult offenders (Feld, 1998, 510). The Supreme Court argued already in 1966: "the child receives the worst of both worlds: he gets neither the protections accorded to adults nor the solicitous care and regenerative treatment postulated for children." (Kent v. United States, 383 U.S. 541, 556, 1966, Ibid. 516). For instance, less than a dozen states grant juveniles any right to a jury trial (Ibid. 516). Surveys report that juveniles receive a jury trial in perhaps 1 to 3 percent of delinquency cases, a rate substantially lower than that of adult criminal defendants (Ibid. 517), and juvenile judges tend to convict youths more readily than juries (Ibid. 517).

To the extent that juvenile distinctions still operate, they are increasingly undermined by "Get Tough" approaches. Beginning in the middle to late seventies, legislatures revised their juvenile codes' purpose clauses to eliminate rhetorical support for rehabilitation. Several state court decisions endorsed punishment as a legitimate component of juvenile court sentences (Ibid. 516). "These changes repudiate many of the fundamental original assumptions that juvenile courts should treat youths differently than adults, that juvenile courts operate in a youth's "best interest," and that rehabilitation requires an indeterminate period that cannot be limited by fixed-time punishment," writes Feld (Ibid.).

Feld argues that one of the reasons juveniles have lost basic rights in the criminal system is that the social construction of childhood and adolescence is disappearing, a construct that emerged in the nineteenth century, and allowed for rehabilitative, non-punitive measures outside the adult criminal system. The disintegration of this social category is widely acknowledged by contemporary social theorists as well, including Neil

Postman in *The Disappearance of Childhood* (1994), and Thomas Hine in *The Rise and Fall of the American Teenager* (1999).

In 1997 at my school, one of my students was a victim of this phenomenon. He had been previously designated “special education,” worked hard to test out of this category, maintained a high grade point average, and was appointed school valedictorian. He was “rewarded” by the city government with a request to leave school in his senior year to work 20 workfare hours a week. He had turned 18, and his mother, a victim of domestic violence, was on public assistance: thus, the city thought this boy should contribute more, and the government, less. With support we engendered from City Councilman and activist Tom Duane, this individual teenager was able to continue his education, graduate, and get a full scholarship to an excellent private school; without the extra support we were able to afford him, this boy’s opportunities would have been quickly truncated. Instead of getting an education, this boy probably would have become another poverty statistic. Even as the government is implicated in keeping such people in poverty, it is these individuals who are finally blamed as *deviants* in a “culture of poverty” (Humanities Preparatory Academy, 1997-1998).

As economic safety nets are diminished in the contemporary hyper-capitalist culture, the emphasis on laissez-faire Social Darwinist tenets, like survival of the fittest individual, are increasingly emphasized. Under the Democratic Presidency in the nineties, welfare was cut for single mothers and immigrants, workfare was enforced for students struggling on public assistance, and five-year limits on such services were indiscriminately imposed. The *child* has been thrown into this jungle to survive as well as he or she can, no longer a safeguarded special category.

In addition to the disappearance of economic safety nets, support for children as a social group in need of “different” attention than adults, has also been removed, forcing them to compete with all other individuals on the unlevelled playing field. The caveat for young people, “adolescents,” as a category has been bludgeoned. The boys who killed were casualties of this ideological and structural change in the social and criminal system. They committed mass murder, and as adults would have certainly been given life sentences, if not in some states, the death penalty. Across the nation, infractions by children are meted increasingly harsh punishments as a result of these high-profile precedents. In Mobile, Alabama, Brian Keith Johnson, age 17, was sentenced to 10 years in prison for firing a gun in his high school parking lot even though no one was hurt (Associated Press, “Student Gets 10 Years For Firing Gun,” 2001).

These swift response effectively replaced discussion and therefore possibilities for personal and social transformation. The horror these boys inflicted affected the nation as a bleeding wound, and the public demanded immediate intervention; but without time to adequately assess the causes, and potential remedies for widespread healing, this correction became another shield, blaming only the individual in lieu of the cultural forces that helped create them. The reflexive actions annihilated any relationship to past approaches that treat juveniles differently. Life imprisonment or the harshest punishment under the law became the new standard both among these cases, and in many less horrific cases that followed.

Our culture values individual competition and blames the “losing” individual for social ills. Responsibility is increasingly deflected. When rehabilitation was a more common correction method, there was at least some tacit acknowledgment that a

socialization process went awry, necessitating remedy by the culture/State. Hyper-capitalism helps create hyper-masculinity expectations (that resulted in recent school shootings), and similarly responds to these events by seeking to remove these “deviant” individuals from the otherwise “functioning” competitive culture.

In contrast in 1924, (regarding the murder considered an historical precedent to contemporary school shootings), Defense Attorney Clarence Darrow won the case against the death penalty for Leopold, Jr., and Loeb on the basis of their youth at age eighteen and nineteen. From his closing speech:

Is youth a mitigating circumstance? Well, we have all been young, and we know that fantasies and vagaries haunt the daily life of a child. We know the dream world we live in. We know that nothing is real. We know the lack of appreciation. We know the condition of the mind of a child. Here are two boys who are minors. The law would forbid them making contracts, forbid them marrying without the consent of their parents, would not permit them to vote. Why? Because they haven't that judgment which only comes with years, because they are not fully responsible (Higden, 1975, 191).

Darrow took the case because it was a “rare chance to strike a blow against capital punishment.” He thought he was articulating the perspective that would “dominate the future” (Higden, 1975, 124). Instead, in similar situations today, politicians demand the death penalty for children as young as eleven.

Now, most states consider “automatic childhood” at sixteen years or younger, but some states prosecute children as adults who are as young as thirteen if they are charged with murder. Other than Harris and Klebold (age 18 and 17), the boys in the central cases discussed here were sixteen or under.

In *Thompson v. Oklahoma*, 487 U.S. 815 (1988) the Supreme Court ruled that executing an offender for a crime committed at age 15 violates the Eighth Amendment

prohibition on “cruel and unusual punishment” (Feld, 1998, 529). But in *Stanford v. Kentucky*, 493 U.S. 361 (1989), the Court ruled that it would not violate the Constitution if it executed a youth at sixteen or seventeen. State courts routinely uphold sentences of “life without possibility of parole” for youths as young as thirteen convicted and sentenced as adults (Ibid. 529). Feld argues:

Both the erosion of juvenile court jurisdiction over serious offenders and the conclusion that they are as criminally responsible as adults undermine the rationale that younger offenders differ qualitatively from adults or need a juvenile court separate from the adult criminal justice system (Ibid. 529).

In the justice system, punishment is supposed to be based on the notion that responsible actors make conscious choices and deserve consequences. Treatment, previously the norm prescribed in juvenile courts, focuses on the possibility that social or psychological factors caused the delinquent behavior, and assumes that intervention can improve the offender’s future well being, and mitigate the potential for recidivism. Previous distinctions between juvenile and adult justice was predicated on the idea that young people are not fully formed or conscious, or old enough to understand the consequences of their actions, a mitigating factor for determining insanity for an adult. Without these categories, adolescents are treated as callously as adults, in an increasingly competitive, individualistic, and “independent-focused” culture.

The underlying assumption of the rehabilitation model is that people can change, especially children, and that rather than excluding “bad” people in jail or through execution, society is willing to work with them, potentially opening the opportunity for larger self-reflection and cultural transformation. The focus is not only on the *individual* as “abnormal” and/or “deviant,” but also on examining the larger social and

psychological forces that might have caused an individual to err. In the present climate, with the court predilection for punishment and the recent death penalty fervor, the possibility for larger change is diminished in favor of individual revenge and retribution for victims.

In the final analysis, however, even past efforts at “treating juvenile delinquency” have merged with penal efforts at social control, as well as over-emphasis on the individual. Feld writes:

The juvenile court welfare idea chooses among the characteristics of certain children--not their lack of decent education, *which is not their fault*, nor their unmet health needs, *which are not their fault*, nor their dysfunctional family or adverse social circumstances, *which are not their fault*, but an instance of conduct in which they violated the criminal law and *which is their fault*. Unlike their social conditions, criminal behavior is the one characteristic for which adolescents are at least partly responsible (emphasis in original, Ibid. 535).

Thus, the focus in the juvenile courts reflects the larger cultural focus on the *individual*, preventing the social revamping necessary for deep and meaningful social change.

In the decades since *Gault* (1967) and *McKeiver* (1971), more than one-quarter of the states have redefined their juvenile codes' statements of legislative purpose to de-emphasize rehabilitation and the child's “best interest,” and to assert the priority of public safety, and retribution (Ibid. 530). According to the *National Research Council*, the average prison time tripled between 1975 and 1989 (Currie, 1998, 14). This period parallels Ronald Reagan's presidency beginning in 1982, trumpeting laissez-faire capitalism, and the beginning of the end for most United States government supported social programs. Republican control over the national agenda and a re-constructed cultural consciousness spearheaded the hyper-capitalist culture still maintained under

Democrats between 1992 and 2000. Prisons have been funded and built more fervently than any other social institution, and policy trends for punishment almost entirely replaced the rehabilitation programs of the fifties and sixties.

The “Get Tough” on crime trend, then, correlates with the contemporary pressure for boys to achieve the unattainable and violent masculinity expectations by which the boys who killed were tormented. Yet, William Bennett, John J. DiIulio, and James P. Walters, authors of a leading conservative tract on crime, go so far as to recommend more punishment over rehabilitation, stating that the justice system has actually been *emasculated* by “the notion that the first purpose of punishment is to rehabilitate criminals” (emphasis in original, Currie, 1998, 164).

The boys who killed were first abused and harassed about their masculinity. These smaller boys tried to trump this “sexual harassment,” by picking-up guns and causing widespread domination and terror, and these boys were finally imprisoned for life based on notions that harsher punishment reflect the policies of a more *masculine* country.

Because of the current fiscal crisis, Jacobson says there is a rare opportunity now to influence policy makers to reduce prison time and increase rehabilitation models. Programs need to be cut since politicians won’t raise taxes, and national and state polling statistics suggest that crime is no longer the number one concern for Americans. With limited social service funds, the only public program that is growing is prison. Education, transportation, environmental protection, and other social services have all shrunk. Jacobson says that since funding is non-existent, this is a rare opportunity to funnel money towards more cost-effective rehabilitative programs. In his forthcoming

book, *Downsizing of American Prisons*, (Jacobson, 2002) Jacobson argues that the time is right for supporting rehabilitation models and decreasing funding for long jail sentences.

If so, attention may also get re-directed towards addressing the deeper cultural problems inherent in contemporary society, instead of blaming the specific individuals that are its worst casualties.

Reconstructing Masculinity

The larger scope of the problem is the masculinity expectations underlying all these social institutions. These values need reconstructing for real change to occur. Presently these masculinity expectations seem to contribute to the large continuum of crimes committed mostly by men. Faludi in *Stiffed* (2000) discusses the rage incurred when adult men are downsized or fired from their jobs. Economic power is also associated with adult masculinity expectations, and such a loss can inspire the same violence and rage among adult men that manifested in the boys who killed. In fact all the adult men responsible for contemporary shooting massacres had been recently unemployed or a victim of a stock crash. Mark Barton, the gunman who killed nine people and wounded 12 at two brokerage firms in Atlanta, Georgia (July 31, 1999) lost \$105,000 in stock trading in less than a month, and left a note vowing revenge on those who had “greedily sought my destruction” (Hill, 1999). Alan Eugene Miller opened fired at two firms in which he had worked in Pelham, Alabama, August 5, 1999. He killed three people and was reported as an “enraged worker” (Pressley, 1999). The adage referring to frustrated and furious workers “going postal” became a common term for

“acting crazy” due to the huge number of shootings taking place by post office employees in their workplace.

Domestic Violence

Economic crisis for adult men, and athletic and physical poverty for young boys translates to a degraded sense of “femininity,” untenable for males striving to demonstrate stalwart “masculine” qualities. In this light it is illuminating to look at the cultural dynamics present in domestic violence where masculinity and femininity expectations are writ large.

Women in abusive domestic situations often experience their abuse daily. They are humiliated, called names, threatened, and beaten. Their lives are controlled by their partners’ moods. Recalling Hegel’s master-slave relationship, one boy said he tracked the mood of the school’s “biggest bully” breathing easily only on the days when the “jock” was absent (Le Blanc, 1999). Abused women also watch their male partners carefully. Many do not feel confident or strong enough to defend themselves, like the boys who are smaller and thinner. Many of these women do not have the economic resources to leave, like children who are tied to their families’ finances and policies. Finally, one day, some of these women fight back. They may wound or even kill their abusers. Today many of these women are exculpated in court. The jury understands that the final blow was in self-defense for a lifetime of abuse. Many of these women walk free.

Although there are vast differences between these two groups, these boys may have similar experiences. Some distinctions occur, however. Many of the victims of the

boys who killed, for example, were not even the same bullies that actually abused them. Some of their targets were innocent others, unfortunate representatives of the society these boys felt had wronged them. They do need to be held accountable for their actions, but so does the society that helped create them. We must understand from where this rage emerges, how it may parallel the reactions of other people who lack power, and experience abuse, and why the boys acted as they did. This will help society transform, and help these kinds of children lead more productive lives, rather than destroying others and their own.

Furthermore, the domestic violence model is ripe for magnifying the effect of masculinity expectations in another contemporary social institution, the nuclear family. Individual, aggregate, and cross-cultural data find that the greater the degree of gender inequality in a relationship, community, and society, the higher the rates of violence towards woman (Gelles, 1998, 193, and *Bureau of Justice Statistics*). While statistics vary, according to the Department of Justice's National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS), between 1987 and 1991, intimates committed an average of 621,015 rapes, robberies, or assaults. Females are ten times more likely to be victims than males (Ibid. 185). In 1999, this figure increased to 671,110. The age of female victims steadily declined between 1993 and 1999. Intimates killed 45% of all female murder victims between the ages 20-24 (Rennison, Bureau of Justice Statistics Press Release, 2002). Violence against women in intimate relations tends to be a pattern, not a single event (Tonry, 1998, 186).

Smuts (1992), Daly and Wilson (1988), and Burgess and Draper (1989) argue from a socio-biological theory that domestic violence results from "male reproductive

striving.” Human and nonhuman primates are postulated to use aggression against females to intimidate females so that they will not resist future male efforts to mate with them and to reduce the likelihood that females will mate with other males. Thus males use aggression to control female sexuality to males’ reproductive advantage” (Ibid. 198). The implication is that this is a “natural” masculine tendency, destined to run amok unless adequate social restraints discourage this behavior.

In fact, however, most social structures create rather than discourage aggressive “masculine” behavior. and theories such as the one just mentioned, tend to exonerate not just the individual perpetrator, but the existing social system as well. Feminist scholars blame economic and social processes that operate directly or indirectly to support a patriarchal social order and family structure. Patriarchy then causes the historical pattern of systematic violence directed against female partners.

Male batterers tend to have typical characteristics that include feeling 1. “Entitled to exercise control over their spouse/partner;” 2. “Supported in engaging in spousal/partner abuse--For example, Reinforcement for patriarchy; general violence of modern culture; approving peers;” 3. “Extremely jealous and possessive;” 4. “Overly dependent on the victim;” 5. Entitled to “coerce the victim to have sex without protection against pregnancy or sexually transmittable diseases;” and 6. Entitled to “criticize the victim and call her sexually degrading names” (NVAA, 1999).

In short, male batterers tend to magnify typical “masculine” behaviors including controlling women, and they receive institutional support for these beliefs. Typical masculinity expectations without “overt” violence condone the controlling of women,

expectations for female dependency and sexual availability, and submission from females towards the dominant male. Magnifying these dynamics in domestic abuse becomes a lens to the devastating effects of binary gender roles in typical relationships. Men who feel powerless, perhaps economically troubled, and concerned about their own “masculine” prowess, may be more likely to try to prove their “masculinity” by asserting dominance over women in these kinds of dynamics. Similarly the boys who killed shot and killed girls who rejected them, and boys who they perceived as threatening their “masculinity.” The school shootings are then only another manifestation of a very common gender problem, only recently taking this new shape and form.

Summary

In this chapter, a discussion of the effects of current “Get Tough,” policies is analyzed and challenged in lieu of more effective rehabilitation models recommended for prevention, intervention, and correction. The contemporary “masculine” focus on punishment and revenge contributes to the problem manifested in the 131 fatalities and injuries resulting from school shootings. The disappearance of childhood as a social category in the justice system, and as a correction alternative may develop from a hyper-laissez faire capitalist culture that advocates the removal of all safety nets (including the notion of childhood) in the service of Social Darwinist ideology. Unless this trend is ameliorated, and social rehabilitation models are implemented more widely, and masculinity associations with violence transformed, the high incidence of violence in the United States, the use of prisons as containers for a substantial part of the American population, and school violence specifically, is in danger of continuing unabated.

CONCLUSION:

Overview

The boys who killed seemed to believe they had no alternative options. They were no longer willing or able to consent to an institutional structure that treated them as perpetual pariahs. They seemed to be voicing criticism of the existing order to no avail. With such a dearth of options, Stanley Aronowitz writes in "Essay on Violence," that some people:

May exit, in which case they have determined that they have no place in the system and renounce their right to participate...For even when rarely used, under some circumstances, exit may be the only way to retain opposition. If individuals are deprived of the *exit* option, those in power can and do force people out of the community under terms that benefit the system, not the individual...Littleton may be read as an instance of how difficult is the life of marginality in a society that demands loyalty even in the wake of its refusal to provide space for irregular voices but, simultaneously, denies option of exit, except in suicide (Aronowitz, 2000, 220).

Some of the boys who killed committed suicide. Most of them had some suicide ideation, and of course, all of them engaged in homicide, an action that would put them behind bars for life, a form of "suicidal homicide." They seemed to feel they had no exit, and they were left with their last resorts. All of them knew they would be eventually caught, and didn't bother to hide their identities. In fact it seemed to be part of the point--that everyone should see these boys at what they considered their fullest expression of powerful masculinity.

This rash of *suicidal homicides* recalls classic literature in the early nineteenth century. At the end of many of the most famous ones of that time--Leo Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina*, Gustave Flaubert's *Madam Bovary*, and Kate Chopin's *The Awakening*--

women who tried to challenge social norms were punished so terribly by society, that each preferred to end their life abruptly in some form of suicide. In 1991, the same theme was repeated in the popular film, *Thelma And Louise*: two women expressed their anger at a society they felt had stifled their options because they were women. As if little had really changed since the early 1900's, and in the face of *no exit*, they also committed suicide. These texts speak to the social conditions in which women felt painfully imprisoned. Today the young boys who killed in their schools may be expressing the contemporary frustrations males have in a culture of increasingly unattainable and violent masculinity expectations.

School reform measures have been widely implemented to address these conditions, conditions described reductively as *school violence*. In lieu of cultural transformation, however, these interventions are largely band-aids for social symptoms. Aronowitz also argues that contemporary efforts to address violence in schools, like widespread mediation programs, are ultimately ineffective because they comprise a lone anti-violence voice in a culture that systemically condones and encourages violence to settle disputes. Children, especially males, in both urban and suburban neighborhoods learn that they must defend themselves physically, or risk getting picked-on relentlessly. These are also the foreign policy models appearing on the daily news. Most recently, the binary split between good and evil, and the rationale for brute force, is visible in foreign policy differentiating between "civilization" and an "evil-axis," the United States and "others."

Efforts at teaching communication skills in the schools is further undermined, writes Aronowitz, because it is either aligned with the goals of the "institutional power"

in the school, and therefore mistrusted by other students, it is trumped by the final decisions of the internal administration, or it is made impotent by external policies imposed by politicians “more comfortable with supply-side repression, than with education...” (Ibid. 223). This, in concert with the lack of advocacy for non-violent conflict resolution in the rest of society, contributes to the reduction of mediation’s efficacy.

In an idealized version of a response to a school shooting threat on the television show, *Boston Public*, the adults in the series act quickly on behalf of students who are teased. A well-meaning teacher is made aware of specific bullies in the school. At first she bullies them back. She calls them “sheep,” and she makes them make sheep sounds like “baaahh” to humiliate them, and to “teach them a lesson,” a practice unfortunately common in many schools. The Principal learns of her behavior and cautions her that while her intentions deserve merit, her behavior was inappropriate. The teacher amends her ways, and this time, makes presentations in all the classes to educate students about the harmful effects of bullying. This method is more effective and the bullies not only stop their harassment but also apologize to their victim (*Boston Public*, 2002).

In this program, the alleged school shooter schemer is caught and jailed, but he too is not left alone. While the teachers and Principal receive awards by the other students for their wonderful commitment to the students at the school, one particularly devoted teacher sits loyally with the alleged perpetrator in jail.

In this fictional re-enactment, no child is abandoned, no teacher is complicit, and all bullies are gently educated to reform their ways. This was not the reality in the

schools of the boys who killed. In the seeming absence of even imagining such a potential reality, the boys looked to destroy everything.

The boys who killed were not rescued, and they were determined to blow-up everything, including the school itself. They did not seem to have teachers who might re-educate their bullies. They decided, instead, to seek their own revenge. In their worldview, they seemed to perceive their choices as surviving the status quo, getting shoved into lockers, and otherwise harassed, or finding some larger means of destruction than those that had been previously used against them.

At the school where I work, we have four central interventions to try to dissuade students from violence: *The Fairness Committee*, *the Talk*, *Mediation*, and *Town Meeting* (*Town Meeting* has many roles, and was discussed in more detail in the last chapter).

In *Fairness*, a jury of peers, including students and teachers, hear the charged student. The complainant bringing the person to *Fairness* explains why they brought the accused there. (Both teachers and students can bring other teachers or students to *Fairness*). The accused responds to the allegations and in consensus with the jury helps to decide further action. If the accused admits culpability, and takes responsibility for the infraction, s/he may volunteer some method of compensation to the complainant, or to the community harmed by the accused actions. Some types of redress include public apologies, written self-reflections, and/or community service.

The *Talk* may take place with the accused student and his teacher, Advisor, Principal, Guidance Counselor, Social Worker, and/or parent. Constructive discussions are attempted to help the student recognize the costs of fighting, brainstorm alternative

methods of responding to conflict, understand the underlying causes of the problem, and develop larger support systems and resources for the individual.

A neutral mediator, either student or teacher conducts a *Mediation*. Students in conflict with other students and/or teachers are persuaded to understand each other's positions, trade apologies or other signifiers of conciliation, focus on future behavior rather than staying stuck in past grievances, and recognize the cost of not settling. Failure to resolve the dispute in mediation generally remands immediate referral to the Principal where parents, the Superintendent, suspension hearings, or other bureaucratic means of intervention proceed. If the conflict is resolved in mediation, it is kept confidential, and the disputants agree together on the resolution in a signed agreement of their own making. (Homicidal threats, as discussed earlier, are sent directly to the Principal. Mediation is not an option).

In most of these hearings, boys as well as girls initially insist that violence is necessary to "save face" in their neighborhood and/or school. They say that dirty looks, name-calling, provoking shoves, brutal attacks, interference with the other's boyfriend or girlfriend, and other types of disrespect demand immediate and swift violent action to prevent further escalation of such provocation. The students insist to the adults as well as to each other that this is the only choice available to them. Many of them remind us that their parent(s)/guardian(s) also persuade them to fight to "save face" in their neighborhood.

Talking with students more generally about their reactions to the shooting in Colorado 1999, the responses were all too familiar. While the students generally condemned the actions of the boys who killed, they also understood the rage Eric Harris

and Dylan Klebold felt after being teased. A number of students who felt persecuted relayed their own fantasies about shooting huge numbers of other students (Humanities Preparatory Academy, 1999).

In a separate discussion, students were asked to address whether the Ku Klux Klan should be able to march with their hoods in New York City, an issue raised in 1999 that divided New York City when the Klan announced their plans to march anonymously. The students raised a different concern. They wanted to know why they shouldn't be able to "beat-up" the Klan for their racist views. The teenagers insisted that their parents and friends encouraged them to fight to defend their honor, and the "talking heads" on television news shows often argue derisively and support wars to settle disputes. It is only the teachers at the school who discourage fighting, they complained (Ibid. 1999).

At this school, despite the larger cultural obstacles just mentioned, violence is often averted in favor of alternative conflict resolutions. Accused students agree, for the most part, that resolving the conflict, rather than submitting to bureaucratic interventions, is preferable. After mediating conflicts for 11 years in five different public schools, I've found that while systemic violence prevention in small school communities is often effective, the larger culture of violence seems unaffected by the borough-wide implementation of mediation programs and other alternative initiatives. Widespread cultural and political frameworks need to be overhauled for real change to occur. Each school shooting has driven policy debates with greater fervor. Sadly, efforts to reform the status quo are made without addressing the insidious cultural norms and expectations underlying these events.

Arendt writes: "Sometimes violence is the only way of ensuring a hearing for moderation... Violence, contrary to what its prophesy tells us, is more the weapon of reform, than revolution" (Arendt, 1970, 79). While school structures seem relatively unchanged, the opportunity to discuss and address these issues has become more prevalent. Many reform measures, however ineffectual, have been implemented. This may be, for now, what these boys accomplished with their terrifying actions.

Cultural Transformations

Why Now?

It is necessary to look at the form of violence committed *now*, as well as why violence is so high generally. What is different about current American society that might contribute to this recent shape of violence? The effect of a growing capitalist economy is one central underlying force. How else do different social and economic factors combine to increase pressure on gender expectations?

While violence in this country may be decreasing in the schools according to the FBI, youth homicides are the second leading cause of death among adolescents, and the United States has one of the highest rates of violence in the world. The U.S. is also one of the only developed countries refusing to ban corporeal punishment for children, even though it is a violation of international human rights law. Recently--March 2002--I had to argue with Administration for Children's Services (ACS) for half an hour because they were refusing to accept my child abuse report. They insisted that parents are legally allowed to physically punish their children with implements. (Humanities Preparatory

Academy, 2002). There is a menacing convergence of the widespread trumpeting of hyper-capitalist ideology with these extremely disturbing social trends.

This is a country that celebrates hyper-individualism, a philosophy stemming from proliferating laissez-faire capitalism. The U.S. has fewer social welfare policies and programs like health insurance and childcare than any other industrialized nation. The current administration insists that the government has no role in trying to prevent future school shootings, and that preventing school shootings is solely the responsibility of individual families.

Richard Slotkin also documents the historically violent proclivities in America. In *The Fatal Environment*, Richard Slotkin argues that historically American mythology and ideology are predicated on war and violence. Industrial progress was celebrated even as it created new misery and social problems. The growth of business was at the expense of small business ruin and bankruptcy. Machines produced new forms of production as well as new class of factory workers; the new class had neither independence nor property, and no plausible potential for becoming economically self-sufficient.

The Frontier Myth celebrated economic expansion and rationalized the massacre of the inhabitants of this land. “The rules were clear but flexible, adapting readily to shifts of mood that might be subtle or sudden, and might move from a mode in which the deployment of genocidal violence was so indirect or so absurdly motivated that it seemed almost playful,” writes Slotkin (Slotkin, 1985). “At the core of the myth,” Slotkin continues, “is the belief that economic, moral, and spiritual progress are achieved by the heroic foray of civilized society into the virgin wilderness, and by the conquest and subjugation of wild nature and savage mankind” (Ibid.)

In *Dr. Strangelove*, characterized by the famous statement: “How Americans learned to stop worrying and live with the bomb,” a similar thesis is presented. America is perceived as a violent country finding rationales to accept these kinds of conditions and practices. Violence is documented in both official and oppositional violence. The assassination of John F. Kennedy as well as Martin Luther King Jr. and Malcolm X, figures of hope and symbols of change in American, further “saturated the culture as disillusion and violence infected and molded a variety of cultural and political responses throughout the late sixties and early seventies” (Henriksen, 1997).

Robert Samuels (2000) argues that today the global dominance of amoral capitalism contributes to the cultural resistance towards regulating guns, video games, Internet sites, and violence-oriented media. He argues that the United States wants to hold onto the idea of free-market capitalism, and resists limiting potentially dangerous institutions to protect this dominant paradigm (Samuels, 2000, 316). Samuels notes that in reading hundreds of articles about Columbine, virtually every aspect of our culture is blamed except capitalism. “In many ways, we have lost the ability to critique and limit the role of economics in our lives because we see no alternative to capitalistic relationships,” he writes (Ibid. 316).

While Samuels writes trenchantly that economic restructuring is one important institution in need of change, he is in danger of missing other cultural institutions at fault. Regulating violence in media and video games, for instance: (1) still leaves cultural norms untouched in other social structures, ready to wreak similar havoc in other areas, (2) accords with conservative efforts to control social norms through censorship, and doesn’t ultimately change the basic structure of contemporary laissez-faire-type

contributing to the problems. Economics is, in any case, a major influential facet affecting many institutions, desperately in need of change.

Finally, increased technological advances such as email and home telecommuting, while positive in many respects, have also caused more social isolation as people leave community work places and spend more time alone in their homes with their computers. The perception of increased connection with people through resources like e-mail is dangerously deceptive as it may offer increased contact with others while simultaneously decreasing live interaction, intimacy, and quality time. Internet use and related social isolation have been seen as part of the problems growing in communities where other activities are less accessible.

Suburbs have been heralded as a watershed of success, most often achieved by the “white, upper-middle class nuclear family.” Economic determinist theories posit that in contrast to *cultures of poverty* in the inner cities, suburbs represent the “safe, successful zone, of a highly civilized and productive community.” Young people in these neighborhoods are thought to have all the opportunities, destined for success and happiness, and all that America as a world power provides. The increasing incidence of school shootings in suburbs, as well as the violence hidden in fraternity hazing, sports fights and fatalities, and “normal adolescent bullying” challenges these beliefs, unveiling the more David Lynch-like undercurrents of a culture also deeply unsatisfied, unsupported, and alienated. This thesis seeks to more clearly depict these dissatisfactions and social fissures, expose the relationship to hyper-capitalist ideology and unattainable masculinity expectations, and propose new paths for significant change. What follows next is a focus on the construction of gender, for both men and women.

Changing Gender Expectations

At the turn of the twenty-first century we benefit from a huge literature documenting the oppression of women and analyzing the forced splits between what are perceived as “masculine” and “feminine” aspects of the self. The United States is a nation still equivocal about the rights and respect that women should be afforded; it can’t pass the Equal Rights Amendment to the Constitution, holds tenaciously to patriarchal concepts of the family, and back-peddles on reproductive rights.

Gender expectations for women are confused and conflicted. Laws and social norms still prevent women from making substantive economic or political progress compared to men, and pressure to buy “femininity” continues to increase. At the same time, the “higher” value of masculinity as the symbol and methodology of laissez-faire, individual, competitive, and ultimately violence, is so strongly revered, that it has begun to be imposed on women as well. This pressure on females to act “masculine” as well as “feminine” is visible in cultural spheres as diverse as middle to upper class professionals for “success in business,” and among inner-city female children and adolescents who feel forced to fight to prove they are “tough,” and “unwilling to be picked-on,” in the same way as boys. Looking at the convergence of hyper-capitalism, unattainable masculinity expectations, and the increasing incidence of school shootings during this particular time period exposes the relationship among these social trends.

Historically, gender divisions have made it more difficult for women to take powerful positions in society and to act assertively, and have discouraged men from being sensitive and emotional. In the face of conflicting norms and expectations, many women have made some strides against these prescriptions, while others have re-

embraced more traditional roles. Men have also had conflicted responses. In

Changing Men (1987), Michael Kimmel writes that for many men, feminist critiques have caused a terrified retreat to traditional models of manhood; to others it has inspired a serious reevaluation of traditional masculinity, including support for the social, political, and economic struggles of women and gays (1987, 10). Males who retreat to traditional models of manhood may feel pressured towards more extreme displays of masculinity. They may try to compensate for a perceived inability to meet new masculinity expectations that embrace respect for gays and women as well as “feminine” parts of their personality.

Part of this retreat to more extreme masculinity expectations is physically, as well as emotionally self-destructive. Some men report feeling pressured to look “bigger and stronger” than was necessary in past generations. This has led them to develop eating disorders previously the predominant province of women. With increasing proportions, more men are taking dangerous supplements to increase their muscular physique (Ibid. 16). Harrison Pope, a psychiatrist from Harvard, documents the escalating and destructive socialization for men to look increasingly more “masculine.” He says this training begins when boys are very young. For instance, G.I. Joe dolls marketed for boys are now at least as unrealistic in body shape as Barbie dolls targeting girls. Pope points out that during the Vietnam War in the sixties, G.I. Joe had the equivalent of twelve-inch biceps on an adult male; in 1999, the doll's biceps were the equivalent of twenty-seven inches (Angier, 1998 and WNPR, 1999), as much an anatomical impossibility as Barbie's proportions. Just as Barbie became gradually thinner and bustier, Pope said, each new vintage of G.I. Joe is more muscular and sharply defined (Ibid.). Furthermore, he *G.I.*

Joe Extreme doll wears an expression of rage (Ibid.) that, according to Pope, suggests this emotion is particularly important for young boys. With few socially sanctioned emotional tools, men struggle against increasingly hyper-masculine and narrow expectations. Thus, male identity has become more problematic for young boys.

Writing about the United States at the turn of the last century, Kimmel describes reactionary male behavior in response to female achievements. For example, fear of the women's suffrage movement created the "cult of the outdoor man," he says, as an effort to reinstate a traditional male identity. Kimmel contends that men who retreat from being caring and nurturing in the 21st century may also fail to question traditional male excesses including rape, violence, spousal abuse, gay-bashing, and high-risk sexual behavior (1987).

Men who are loyal to traditional masculinity do not tend to embrace "femininity" in themselves or others. Thus, unable to maintain the traditional superiority demanded of a more complex masculinity that can also incorporate "femininity," and helpless to differentiate themselves from an ever-growing and versatile female identity, they look instead for dynamics that are more compatible with historically learned patterns.

This phenomenon caused some women to rethink recent achievements. Against the history of feminism struggling for equality between the sexes and for an expanded emotional continuum for both genders, some women began to re-embrace old male and female norms, in effect, demanding a return to their own subordination. Boys are thus pressured to be even more aggressive in their gendered relationships. These gender struggles are not lost on a teenage culture working hard to imitate perceived expectations for becoming young "women" and "men."

Books like *The Rules*, (Fein and Schneider, 1998) and more recently, *The Surrendered Single* (Doyle, 2002), received national attention by restructuring contemporary dating practices in a way reminiscent of the 1950s. Women were told: 1. Not to return a man's call until the man makes three attempts; 2. Not to accept a date with less than three days notice; 3. If speaking on the phone with a man, hang-up after ten minutes, regardless of the substance of the conversation in that moment; and 4. Sustain a "hard to get" persona throughout the dating process, and even into married life (Fein and Schneider, 1998).

According to *The Rules*, care must be made to ensure that the man always feels that he is the predator. Furthermore, any male that does not act like the "predator," does not pursue the woman--in spite of having calls unreturned, phone conversations ended abruptly, and getting clear messages that the woman isn't interested--is considered less masculine by such books, and therefore unworthy of the woman's attention in the first place. (Perhaps in the end, this is more of a prescription for sexual harassment than dating decorum).

The Rules was a *New York Times* bestseller and followed religiously by many women, including some who were staunch feminists in the seventies and eighties. (It was not until one of *The Rules* authors, Sherrie Schneider, got a divorce in 2000, that the book lost momentum as a reactionary, socially imposed, gender imperative). Contributing to this disturbing trend, Wendy Shalif's *Returning to Modesty* recommended that women return not just to the 1950s, but the 1850s (Zahra, 1999), and start by withholding sex before marriage (Gurley, 1999). In *The Lipstick Proviso*, Karen Lehrman, an ambitious

thirty-something woman herself, cautions successful women to try to wait for a man to call. She writes:

Waiting for a man can be frustrating and infantilizing, especially for women who are used to asserting and fulfilling their needs in every other area of their lives, but this voluntary restraint has to last only until a 'relationship' develops, which for better or for worse is typically quite soon (Lehrman, 1997, 109).

In the same trend, Karen Salmansohn, also of Lehrman's generation, published a successful book called, *How to Make Your Man Behave Like a Dog* (1994); the pretty pink booklet is based on the same principles of withholding affection and only "rewarding good behavior," lest the boy's "masculine" aggressive disposition runs amok. While these books strive to portray men as innately powerful predators, the effect on men may be increased pressure, anxiety, and feelings of impotency. The books are meant to restore traditional gender dynamics, by imploring women to hide their strength in the service of a constructed perception of male domination they argue is *natural*. Men, human and fallible, may actually balk at the expectation to be so strong, unemotional, and predatory, when they are also sensitive, emotional, and have needs of their own.

Grappling with the problem of retreat that Kimmel describes, Lehrman agrees with *The Rules* that there are few men who are not threatened by independent women.

Men who are both strong and successful themselves seem to be far less intimidated by strong and successful women...Unfortunately these men are still relatively rare...While most of them (men) were quite flattered to receive a call from a woman, many had this funny little habit of running when pursued (Lehrman, 1997, 109).

Men have not necessarily embraced the level of dominance and aggression some women anticipate from them, and this expectation in itself may make men less comfortable being pursued by women. In fact, following *The Rules* trend, many women

seem to become increasingly disappointed by male vulnerabilities, against the unrealistic expectations proposed by *The Rules* that depict a fantasized predatory masculinity. Instead of expecting men to develop a new masculine identity that embraces strength and sensitivity simultaneously, these theories expect both women and men to capitulate to historically constructed gender expectations limiting both men and women's full expression.

Social psychologist, William Pollack, in *Real Boys* sees these kinds of views as part of a social attack on boys' self-esteem. He rejects the notion that boys are "sexual aggressors, driven by their frantic biological urge for sex" (Pollack, 1998, 150). Instead, this perspective, itself enforced by the "boy code," pressures boys to demonstrate the bravado expected from them. Inside, he says, they are "not self-sufficient loners," but "yearners for connection" (Ibid. 181). Many boys in Pollack's study reject the dictum to play sports and to be domineering with girls, expressing instead more diverse wants and needs. Pollack also notes that boys can display an "intellectual bravado" (Ibid. 160), even though they are now more likely than girls to dropout of high school, less likely to go to college, and less likely to pursue graduate programs (Ibid.). Boys' intellectual bravado is no more an indicator of a natural proclivity than their sexual bravado, but rather the outcome of hurtful and powerful social influences.

To show something of this phenomenon statistically, Pollack's analysis contributes important insights to the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) research on depression. According to the NIMH, 12 percent of women and 7 percent of men experience a major depressive illness each year (NIMH, 1999). Disturbing yes, but Pollack's findings provide even more staggering information. He writes that because of

the "boy code," boys feel compelled to appear tough and independent even when they are truly depressed (Harpster, "Angry Young Men, Depression, Anger, and Shame," 1998.). This code is reinforced through diverse social influences including peers, parents, schools, and media.

In addition to having difficulty communicating sadness, boys may not always know when they are depressed. When boys are pressured to deny vulnerability their basic emotional needs for self-expression are undermined. Then as a result of these socially imposed and finally internalized pressures, boys are less likely to report their genuine pain on psychological studies or surveys. Pollack says advanced research conveys that boys are just as depressed as girls but that they don't necessarily "look" depressed to others (Pollack, 1998.).

Pollack also notes a recent epidemic of suicides by young men (Ibid.). The NIMH officially recognizes that while women report attempting suicide about twice as often as men, males are more likely than females to die by suicide (NIMH, 1999). Girls may talk about their feelings more, but if boys were allowed the same socially sanctioned vehicles of self-expression, we might hear more about their pain; instead boys are more likely to succeed in acting irreversibly on their despair. A new trend of books documenting these pressures on males include Faludi's *Stiffed* (1999), Susan Bordo's *The Male Body* (2000), Dan Kindlon and Michael Thompson's *Raising Cain* (1999), William Pollack's *Real Boys* (1998), and James Garbino's *Lost Boys* (2000).

Two different types of pressure, therefore, help construct a disproportionately hyper-masculine response from males. Kimmel, Lehrman, Doyle, Salmansohn, and Fein and Schneider write that traditionally feminist responses, embracing assertive behavior

by woman, may cause some men to retreat to more traditional male constructions.

My own analysis is that this expectation itself, for males to embrace a predatory personality, may contribute to a male retreat of a different nature. Unable to meet these unattainable expectations, men may choose to pose alone as hyper-masculine, "safe" from relationships with woman, unwilling to expose themselves as humans with complex sensitivities of their own. Any pressure for gender to be so severely divided, and for men and women to respectively express only one side of the continuum, whether traditional constructions, or the binary reverse, creates false, unattainable, and alienated gender identities.

Greater sensitivity to the destructive demands of historical and contemporary gender expectations may lead to an earlier detection of unbridled rage. Ultimately transforming cultural consciousness so that, for instance, boys have access to a wider range of emotions than anger would go a long way towards decreasing male violence. When boys feel weak, sad, scared, anxious, lonely, or depressed, the negative experience is unnecessarily magnified when they feel this also indicates a lapse in the "tough disposition" manhood demands.

Furthermore, small school environments allow for deeper connections between students and teachers, and among students themselves. Male teachers can model the acceptability of connecting and having supportive relationships with young boys. "More intimate environments in smaller schools would likely allow for more connection between boys and adults say masculinity scholars Kindlon and Pollack (Murray, "Boys To Men: Emotional Miseducation," 1999).

Hyper-Capitalist Gender Expectations

Understanding how these issues are related to contemporary laissez-faire-type deserves more attention.

Christopher Lasch writes:

For the standards that would condemn crime or cruelty derive from religion, compassion, or the kind of reason that rejects purely instrumental applications and none of these outmoded forms of thought or feeling has any logical place in a society based on commodity production (Lasch, 1979).

While good will can certainly derive from institutions other than religion, Lasch highlights the lack of social responsibility inherent in an economic system motivated through profit, rather than community values. As one egregious example, The Bush Administration, at the urging of the world's biggest oil company, ExxonMobil, is trying to oust Robert Watson, the British Scientist and chairman since 1996 of the panel that has advised the world about the dangers of global warming. The effort is an attempt "to remove a strong advocate of action to save the planet," reports the *Guardian Weekly* (Brown, "Oil Giant Bids To Oust Expert on Climate," 2002, 5). The paper continues that the Bush decision to take the oil giant's advice is "the latest in a long and successful push by ExxonMobil to undermine climate science and stop Washington taking any action that might damage sales" (Ibid.).

The short digression from the specific focus on masculinity and violence is meant to highlight the destructive power of contemporary laissez-faire-type on policy as well as common sense in general, and masculinity expectations in particular, not just nationally, and internationally, but globally as well. For financial gain, the survival of the planet is

at stake. For adult men, financial success is as much a masculine signifier as athletic bodies are for young boys. This hyper-capitalist trend can't be divorced from the dominating role of men in politics. Recall that Connell theorizes *hegemonic* men as typified by the successful politician and/or businessman. The entrenched relationship between masculinity and violence cannot be underestimated as a social value currently existing within an inextricable link to the profit-motive. Challenges to these social norms will have to be waged on social, political, cultural, as well as economic fronts.

Hyper-masculinity expectations have driven gender towards extreme polarities in the service of commodifying gender. Huge corporate markets have benefited from the sales of diet supplements, steroids, gym memberships, expensive clothes accentuating masculinity or femininity, make-up, hair-removal apparatus, hair growth products, and the like. Sports Club advertisements capitalize on physical insecurities: "Wonder why your Valentine has stopped giving you chocolates?" (*New York Sports Club*, Billboard Ad, 2002). Hyundai car commercials admonish the typical man for not acting "bad" (read, masculine) enough, and winding up in a "feminine" slow minivan, instead of a fast, "masculine" one (Hyundai Commercial, 2002). Immediate gratification leading to impulse purchasing has almost entirely trumped the outmoded "work ethic." A recent commercial for 7UP celebrates the unusual basketball star, Kode Bryant, who went straight to the major leagues from high school. In the clip, "well-meaning" adults admonish themselves for suggesting that he study chemistry, or become a doctor. "Obey your thirst," is the montage of the commercial, and the underlying theme for contemporary *laissez-faire*-type generally: follow your impulse, not a well-thought out, pre-meditated future. (7UP, TV Commercial, 2002). The "lottery ticket" mentality that

rewards 1 in a million individuals pays off for high-profile Bryants at the expense of the other 999,999 people. These others may buy into this illusion, and live, interact, plan, and vote according to deceptive promises, rather than confronting, and potentially challenging more economically disturbing realities. Many high school students I have encountered are susceptible to the immediate gratification lure. More than a few young boys, for instance, have tried to drop-out of high school or de-emphasize education, in false conscious hopes of skipping to the athletic (“hyper-masculine”) major leagues.

Furthermore, the pressure to achieve unattainable masculinity expectations combined with increasing expectations for “magical” Bryant-type economic rewards contributes to a growing source of nihilism fueled in part by billions of jobs in the beauty industry, and other typically gender identified markets (Chancer, 1998). In the case of the boys who killed, such nihilism has nurtured seeds of rebellion manifested in disorganized and devastating consequences.

Michael Presdee in *Cultural Criminology and the Carnival of Crime*, writes:

The process of violence involved is about powerlessness and meaninglessness and the loosening of cultural imperatives. In short it is about the total estrangement from the powerful. It is that part of life that celebrates the irrational, celebrates the incomprehensible, celebrates the crude, celebrates the nothingness of being powerless (Presdee, 2000, 9).

The boys who killed had the financial power to purchase “masculinity,” but they did not have the social power, the status-power in Weberian terms, or the cultural capital, according to Bourdieu. The boys who killed did not represent economic symbols of future success like the “preps and jocks” that in effect, exemplified, the mainstream “All-American boy.” In a binary structured society dependent on “evil” to highlight “good,” “wrong” to purchase “right,” the “what not to do,” to pressure harder for “what to

do/buy” the boys who killed became the fall guys. Living in mostly upper-middle class, white, suburban communities, these boys became the “other:” the “feminine” of the “masculine,” the “bad” of the “good,” the “nerds” of the “preps and jocks.” They were the minority, set-up to legitimate the popular, and to serve as the wayward “other,” of the mainstream.

Marx describes the dependence on high unemployment in a capitalist society, serving as a constant threat to the employed, discouraging worker demands with the intimidation of immediate replacements. Economically the system requires the menacing “other” to maintain the low cost of labor; socially this paradigm is practiced pervasively. Without the boys who killed, there would be no competition, social or economic; the boys who killed were the “losers,” so there could be “winners.”

By acting violently, the boys who killed tried to be “masculine,” “good,” and “victorious.” Michael Presdee argues that it is a simplistic premise that “places young people as a major cause of the ‘cracks’ in capitalism” (Ibid. 107). Hence to serve capitalism, young people reflect the distorted values and relationships in the larger society. As the “losers” of this culture they are made into examples of “individual bad seeds,” unable to adapt and cope with the demands of an otherwise “functioning” mainstream society. Like the “problem child” in family systems or the “emotionally disturbed” in psychoanalysis, or the “culture of poverty” in conservative politics, the young “losers” become the blamed victim, masking the greater fractures and disturbances.

When the “losers” rebel, they become the personified “problem,” driving the national agenda towards rationalizing efforts to control young people. Some of these

rationales are manifested in the disappearance of adolescence as a social construction (instead of needing different services, young people are perceived as a social problem and treated as punitively as adults), the withering of rehabilitation as a corrections model, and the increasing trials of children as adults in criminal court.

The boys who killed seemed to be trying to achieve the unattainable masculinity expectations to which they were encouraged to strive. They seemed to think they had found the immediate gratification, hyper-masculinity response that would ensure their position as winners, rather than perpetual losers. The boys who killed believed their actions would prove their masculinity once and for all, and “make them more popular.”

It was not necessarily pure rebellion that fueled their commitment to kill, as much as an effort to win on their perceptions of America’s own terms. This combined with an underlying nihilism, nurtured from the impossibilities inherent in a system that feeds on alienation as an economic motive for purchasing material fulfillment, and a wish to reverse their roles such that new “others” become the “fall guys” instead.

The contradictions inherent in a capitalist economy dependent on individual, competitive, material acquisition directly conflicts with communal, cooperative, and “feminine” values of sharing and getting along. Even girls in contemporary society are pressured to be “masculine” as the capitalist system co-opted the women’s movement for more labor and purchasers. The *Weekly Guardian* reports that “liberated American girls” are at an increasing risk for binge drinking and assault. Binge drinking in American colleges increased for women by 125% between 1993 and 2001, an indication of growing alienation among females as well. Over the past decade the number of women arrested for assault has increased by 46%. Devon Jersild, who published a book about women

and alcohol, reports that binge drinking is associated with power. “They think that, if they drink like a guy, they will be like a guy” (Vulliamy, 2002).

The boys who killed were taught to strive towards “masculinity” values including domination, competition, and emotional containment. They seemed to believe that they achieved this in their final acts. Much like men joining women at high-risk for eating disorders, the increasing pressure for girls to embody similar “masculine virtues” could be an ominous indicator of violence becoming less the province of boys, and more common among girls as well.

Concluding Summary

Cultural norms and values are clearly powerful indicators of the kinds of violence appearing in distinctive societies. The extremely high incidence of violence is a visible sign that social mores may be distorted and destructive. Furthermore, these cases reveal that violence cuts across class and race lines, indicating that violence is not the province of the economically disadvantaged or of minorities as is commonly assumed, but rather a widespread cultural norm. The role of socially constructed masculinity is paramount to explaining violent cultural practices and reactions.

It is also significant that the level of violence in the United States is unsurpassed in the developed world. The high incidence of domestic violence, the number of homicides, the use of the death penalty and the school shooting phenomenon this dissertation analyzes are not common experiences in the rest of developed world as they are in here.

Contradictions develop when there is a belief that “all men/people are created equal,” and yet we still can’t pass an Equal Rights Amendment to the constitution, racial and class prejudice and discrimination are rampant, and class distinctions abound in affording vast differences in quality of life. While white men are considered the most privileged citizens, the general inequality and violence in the United States seems to affect suburban affluent communities as well. The prejudice that fueled many parents to take their children to the suburbs away from minorities and poorer people, manifests in these seeming safe-zones as new pariahs are created and ostracized. This combined with escalating pressures for men to be increasingly violent and dominant or risk relentless ridicule has incited the more visible manifestation of violence in these communities. These dynamics, divisions, and unequal relationships somehow escape recognition because the culture of denial is even more powerful and pervasive.

There are two central arguments I make about the school shootings taking place across the nation. First, the boys who killed responded to two central behaviors in all these cases. They attacked other boys they called “preps and jocks” who attacked their masculinity, and/or they attacked girls who rejected them. Most of the boys who killed responded to both of these behaviors. What is most astonishing is the absence of this analysis in the massive media reporting that took place after each crime. These facts were reported individually in each case, but they were never connected and raised as an issue relating to gender. If gender was considered a motivating factor with the ferociousness with which media violence, gun control, parents, character, and chance were blamed, adequate address of the rampant violence in the culture might have begun.

Instead, the U.S. continues to attack single-issue causes, deflecting attention away from these more serious concerns.

Blaming individual *character* is the most direct disavowal of larger cultural issues. If it is only an aberrant *bad seed* that causes crime, independent of external circumstances, then locking up these individuals will neatly remove them from an otherwise healthy society. With 7 million people in the criminal justice system, 1/3 of some minority populations, prison growth at a record high, and crime still up, it seems unlikely that imprisoning individuals is adequately addressing deeper social problems. Excluding individual *deviants*, rather than examining the perversions pervasive in society generally, prevents the imperative self-reflection I hope to contribute to with this thesis. External circumstances and social constructions like gender must be recognized as central to understanding crime.

Accusing individual *families* comes from a similar source of denial. First of all, these arguments were almost always regarding the destructive influences of working, divorced, or single parents. Yet, most of the boys who killed came from two-parent traditional families with stay-at-home mothers. Furthermore, blaming individual dysfunctional families again diverts attention from the larger social issues. The particular family becomes the “problem child” for society, holding the disturbance of the larger community, so that the rest of the culture can escape indictment.

Of course, individual familial dynamics do contribute, as does any social institution, to the development of children. Nevertheless, essential to understanding these forces is the lack of social and government support afforded these little economic units, and the extreme pressures placed on families to raise children often without health care,

childcare, parental leave, or other services that most industrialized countries afford their citizens. Also, families become dominant socializing agents for teaching distorted gender expectations. Finally, individual parents battling these social pressures, as well as their own challenging childhoods may be more or less positive influences on these children. The effect of parents on school shootings is not an individual unit at fault, but part of a matrix of institutions that may have deleterious effects.

Violence in the media certainly does not help the high level of real violence in society. However, Verrips suggests that media violence is generally used to support traditional values. For the most part, there is no research that shows media violence causes violence, albeit some studies show it can ignite aggressive feelings. Ultimately, American media violence is played internationally, yet the high level of violence in this country is unsurpassed by any developed other. Media violence tends to help reify associations between masculinity and violence, homophobia, and misogyny. It is this part of the socialization process that is destructive.

Gun control laws are also a single-issue target. Access to guns does correlate in most countries with higher deaths by firearms. But, the recent school shooting in Germany took place in spite of their strict gun control laws. Tighter gun control laws would help, but again this is only one piece of a much larger puzzle. The use of guns as the ultimate masculine signifier is most devastating as young boys use guns to expedite their association with manhood.

Finally, the argument that school shootings are the result of chance is the most unconscionable of them all. The boys who killed stated loudly in no uncertain terms both before and after the crimes, both verbally, and in written manifestos, that they killed

because they were angered by “preps and jocks” who called them gay, and/or to revenge “all the girls who had broken-up” with them. Only a culture entrenched in denial could still maintain that there is no explanation for these crimes.

We need to recognize the larger cultural issues, rather than focusing on *Who dunnit?* kinds of explanations. The daily practices of everyday life must be addressed and transformed for real change to occur.

My second argument is that violence is rendered invisible through its association with masculinity and through the economic imperatives that help propel this relationship. In the media, the boys who killed were uniformly described as “scrawny,” “skinny,” or “chubby,” a stark contrast to the “preps and jocks” described as stronger, bigger, and more typically masculine. The boys who killed were all members of outsider groups, and they tended to report that as “computer geeks” their talents were not valued in their schools. Power and prestige was afforded through the schools’ football teams, and other athletic pursuits. Their academic prowess was not respected or appreciated by their peers or adults compared to the reverence furnished on these athletes. Most community members supported the ideological underpinnings of these status-hierarchies, buttressed further by the larger culture.

Through this powerful ideology and cultural hegemony, violence became invisible in these communities because it was so embedded in normal expectations of masculinity. Violence in the United States is higher than in any industrialized country in the world. Yet, violence is still considered an exclusively urban problem. Studies show that violence is actually evenly divided among urban, rural, and suburban areas; it is only through these complex structures of denial that masculinity violence becomes invisible in

certain communities, and solely blamed on the *deviant urban other*. Suburban institutions like fraternity hazing, sports fights, “normal adolescent bullying,” and car racing cost as many lives, if not many more, than school violence generally. It is only through rendering this behavior *normal*, that it is possible to consider violence solely an urban problem. This too, deflects attention away from recognizing violence as a problem in culture more generally. Studies that address violence in urban areas document boys “feeling pressured to prove their masculinity, to show-off in front of other boys, and to dominate others”--all behaviors that emerged as causes of the school shootings in suburban areas too. This complex ideological structure creates the “It can’t happen here,” environment that appeared after each incident. The shock in these communities is directly connected to these institutions of denial.

The so-called “warning signs” in these communities were not missed because every community member was negligent or neglectful. These clues were overlooked because the boys who killed were acting *normal* according to masculinity expectations. They were all obsessed with violence. They wrote explanatory essays for school, they made pre-enactment videos, they told people about their plans to kill certain students, they possessed huge arsenals of guns and bombs in their bedrooms, but the “boys will be boys” ideology made these otherwise clear cues, completely invisible.

Masculinity expectations persuaded these boys that shooting would make them more masculine, and therefore more popular. “Murder is gutsy and daring,” announced one. They thought they would get more respect for practicing such masculinity prowess. They would finally trump the masculinity demonstrated by the “preps and jocks” who had used them to distinguish themselves as the more masculine.

Masculinity expectations continue to increase. Eating disorders are rising for men, toys marketed for males encourage boys to strive towards unattainable body images. Commercials for sports clubs and cars prey on male insecurity and fears of being perceived as feminine. Durkheim's writes: "to pursue a goal which is by definition unattainable condemns oneself to a state of unhappiness." A society falls prey to anomie because "no living being can be happy or even exist unless his needs are sufficiently proportional to his means." Hyper-capitalism has created goals that are impossible to attain. Economically this system is structured on the premise of Durkheim's anomic suicide. "Inextinguishable thirst is constantly renewed torture" (Durkheim, 1915, 247). This alienation and infinite need propels males to buy masculinity, to buy guns, war games, muscle-building supplements," etc. to prove that they are indeed men.

This binary split in society must be widened so that men can express a full continuum of "masculine" and "feminine" behaviors without being attacked as inferior. The result will be greater opportunities for human expression, and a more adequate address of these devastating divisions. Economic regulations must restrain the dependence laissez-faire type capitalism has developed on the alienation that causes slavery to anything that promises the attainment of hyper-masculinity expectations. The violence, misogyny, and homophobia embedded in the construction of masculinity is bred on this alienation. In addition to typically "masculine" attributes, males do have typically "feminine" attributes, as well as homoerotic inclinations, and denying these qualities breeds dependence on external incentives that promise their removal. Violence develops as a reaction to perceived injustice. Now, many males strive to fight these aspects of themselves, as well as anyone who might draw attention to these parts of their

character. Existing on the extreme end of this binary split, maintains the alienation that keeps males enslaved to compulsive commodity acquisition, and to distorted personalities.

This project is launched from Antonio Gramsci's theory of cultural hegemony; in this case that "common sense" can become rigidly hierarchal, and "masculine," fueled by social imperatives that champion an abusive "jock culture" where bullying smaller boys ("others") is permitted and sometimes encouraged. The boys who killed were double victims before they committed their horrific crimes. First, the "jocks and preps" that seemed to rule the school harassed them relentlessly, then the adults and institutions in their lives tacitly or overtly sanctioned this treatment. The contemporary dysfunction of their peer culture, family, school, Church, police and others--gave impetus to their final attacks. They committed the most terrible of acts, and they are responsible for their actions—but it is possible as a culture to be more effective in preventing these types of crimes from occurring. Social norms need to be revamped to include higher social consciousness, more commitment to egalitarian values and ethical economics, and more responsibility to the widespread institution of the real founding principles of the United States--guaranteeing equality and justice for all, and respecting human dignity.

Focus should be directed towards a dynamic transformation of cultural norms. What is necessary is a re-thinking of "common sense" that may be far too common, but that must be examined when it does not make much sense at all. Thus, Herbert Marcuse's premise concludes this journey: "The sickness of the individual is ultimately caused and sustained by the sickness of his civilization" (Marcuse, 1975).

APPENDIX***CASE STUDIES CHART:**

02/02/96	02/19/97	10/01/97	12/01/97	03/24/98	DATE
MOSES LAKE, WASHINGTON	BETHEL, ALASKA	PEARL, MISSISSIPPI	WEST PADUCAH, KENTUCKY	JONESBORO, ARKANSAS	STATE
BARRY LOUKATAIS	EVAN RAMSEY	LUKE WOODHAM	MICHAEL CARNEAL	MITCHELL JOHNSON AND ANDREW GOLDEN	NAME
14	16	16	14	13 AND 11	AGE
S: 2M Teacher: 1	S: 1 Principal: 1	S: 2F Mother: 1	S: 3F	S: 4F Teacher: 1F/pregnant, 14 of 15 victims F	#KILLED
S: 1F	S: 2	S: 7	S: 5	S: 10/9F and 1M Teacher: 1	#WOUNDED
ALGEBRA CLASS, 5 TH PERIOD	SCHOOL LOBBY	STUDENTS GATHERED IN COMMONS	PRAYER CIRCLE IN HALLWAY	GOLDEN PULLS FIRE ALARM: KIDS OUTSIDE: SHOT FROM WOODS	WHERE
		SATAN, HITLER, NIETZSCHE	SATAN	GANG	IDEOLOGY
FRONTIER JUNIOR HIGH/ 500-600 students	BETHEL REGIONAL HIGH SCHOOL/	PEARL HIGH SCHOOL/ 1,000 students	HEATH HIGH SCHOOL/ 600 students	WEST SIDE MIDDLE SCHOOL/ 250 students	HIGH SCHOOL # of students
CALLED FAG IN ALGEBRA CLASS BY POPULAR ATHLETE HE KILLED (OFTEN TEASED BY HIM AS WELL AS OTHERS)	PICKED ON BY A POPULAR FOOTBALL PLAYER AS WELL AS OTHER POPULAR, LARGER BOYS KILLED THIS ATHLETE FOLLOWING AN ARGUMENT	TIRED OF BEING CALLED GAY GIRL-FRIEND BROKE-UP WITH HIM "I AM NOT INSANE. I AM ANGRY. I KILLED BECAUSE..."	TIRED OF BEING CALLED A FAGGOT AND GAY. KILLED A GIRL WHO DIDN'T RETURN HIS AFFECTIONS WANTED TO KILL "POPULAR, PREPPIE STUDENTS" WHO HE BLAMED FOR HIS MISTREATMENT	BEATING UP OTHER GUYS TO PROVE MASCULINITY GIRLFRIEND, CANDACE PORTER, DUMPED JOHNSON GOLDEN REJECTED BY GIRLFRIEND, JEN JACOBS	WHY
HONOR STUDENT	"BRIGHT WITH POOR GRADES," CHESS PLAYER	"HIGH INTELLIGENCE"/ READ NIETZSCHE	"COMPUTER SAVVY" "B-AVERAGE STUDENT"	HONOR STUDENT	TYPE STUDENT
	HEARTBREAK GIRLFRIEND BROKE-UP WITH HIM	HEARTBREAK KILLED FORMER GIRLFRIEND, CHRISTINA MENEFFEE, AND HER BEST FRIEND	HEARTBREAK KILLED A GIRL WHO REJECTED HIM: NICOLE HADLEY	HEARTBREAK SHOT EX-GIRLFRIEND: CANDACE PORTER	RELATIONSHIP WITH GIRLS
.30-30 HUNTING RIFLE AND TWO HAND GUNS.	SHOTGUN WITH A BAG OF AMMUNITION	30-30 RIFLE AND BUTCHER KNIFE	CHROME-PLATED 22 RUGER MARK II PISTOL. TWO SHOTGUNS 38 PISTOL 700 ROUNDS AMMUNITION	HUGE ARSENAL OF WEAPONS INCLUDING: REMINGTON 732 .30-06 RIFLE. UNIVERSAL .30 M1 CARBINE REPLICAS SMITH & WESSON 38 REVOLVER DOUBLE DEUCE BUDDIE 22 TWO-SHOT DERRINGER	WEAPONS USED

				STAR .380 PISTOL, A FIE .380 PISTOL RUGER SECURITY SIX .357 REVOLVER DAVIS INDUSTRIES 38 TWO-SHOT DERRINGER CHARTER ARMS 38 REVOLVER	
STOLE GUN FROM HIS FATHER'S UNLOCKED CABINET NO EVIDENCE THAT THE WEAPONS WERE ILLEGAL 30- 30 HANDGUNS ARE USUALLY CONSIDERED HUNTING RIFLES AND THEREFORE LESS REGULATED.	STOLE SHOTGUN FROM HIS FOSTER MOTHER. SCHOOL SUPERINTE NDENT NO EVIDENCE THE WEAPON WAS ILLEGAL	TOOK FROM OLDER BROTHER WHO ACQUIRED IT LEGALLY FOR HUNTING	STOLE MOST OF THE GUNS INCLUDING THE RUGER MARK II AND THE AMMUNITION FROM HIS NEIGHBOR'S GARAGE NEIGHBOR OWNED THEM LEGALLY. STOLE HIS FATHER'S .38 CAL. PISTOL FROM A BOX IN HIS PARENT'S BEDROOM. LEARNED TO SHOOT AT SUMMER CAMP AND ON A SHOOTING TRIP WITH HIS NEIGHBOR'S FATHER. SAME NEIGHBOR FROM WHOM HE LATER STOLE THE WEAPONS.	SEVEN OF THE WEAPONS TAKEN FROM GOLDEN'S GRANDFATHER THREE TAKEN FROM GOLDEN'S FATHER. ALL OF THE WEAPONS WERE OWNED LEGALLY GOLDEN ALSO OWNED HIS OWN FIREARMS, BUT WAS UNABLE TO BREAK INTO THE STEEL SAFE WHERE THEY WERE KEPT. INSTEAD THE TWO BOYS BROKE INTO THE HOME OF GOLDEN'S GRANDPARENTS AND STOLE THE GUNS HANGING ON DISPLAY ON THE WALL.	WHERE DID THEY GET THEIR WEAP
			ASKED TO BE KILLED		SUICIDAL
					MEDICINE/ DRUG USE
NATURAL BORN KILLERS; BASKETBALL DIARIES	VIOLENT VIDEO GAMES	MARILYN MANSON	MARILYN MANSON; DOOM. QUAKE "I DON'T KNOW WHY IT HAPPENED BUT I KNOW IT WASN'T A MOVIE"	JOHNSON LIKED GANGSTA RAP AND MORTAL KOMBAT VIDEO ESP: TUPAC SHAKUR	MEDIA USED
FAG	RETARDED: SPAZ	GAY NERD	FAGGOT GAY		NAMES CALL
"TOLD FRIENDS HE THOUGHT IT WOULD BE FUN TO GO ON A KILLING SPREE"	TOLD TWO FRIENDS AND OTHERS "TO GATHER IN THE MEZZAZINE" SENT OUT INVITATIONS /PLOTTED ACROSS HALL FROM FOSTER MOTHER: SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENT; MADE A LIST OF 3 TARGETS, FRIENDS	TOLD EX- GIRLFRIEND OF HIS PLANS TO SHOOT AT THE PRAYER GROUP; TOLD OTHER STUDENTS TOO.	TOLD PEOPLE HE WAS GOING "TO SHOOT UP THE SCHOOL"	VOWED TO KILL AL THE GIRLS WHO HAD BROKEN-UP WITH HIM	THREATS MA BEFORE SHOOTING

	SUGGESTED 11 OTHERS				
		YES	YES	YES	WENT TO CHURCH/ DECLARED NORMAL
IN BLACK; "GUNSLINGER FROM WILD WEST"/ LONG GRAY COAT. SAME AS DICAPRIO IN BASKETBALL DIARIES	BAGGY PANTS IN SHOOTING	WORE BIG BLUE TRENCH COAT IN SHOOTING	BLACK TRENCH COAT GOTHIC STYLE	CAMOUFLAGE	DRESS
"PRETTY COOL," HE SAID ABOUT THE SHOOTING "THIS SURE BEATS ALGEBRA DOESN'T IT" HE SAID WHILE HE WAS SHOOTING.	"IT WAS KIND OF COOL WHEN HE SHOT MR. EDWARDS." (PRINCIPAL) SAID ONE STUDENT	"MURDER IS GUTSY AND DARING"	THOUGHT IT WOULD MAKE HIM POPULAR		MADE COMMENTS INDICATING PRIDE FROM SHOOTING
FARM TOWN/RURAL	RURAL/SURBURB/CITY OF 5,000 PEOPLE	RURAL/ SUBURB	RURAL/SURBURBAN	RURAL/SURBURBAN	SURBURBAN/ RURAL /URBAN
		"SHORT LITTLE FAT BOY"	"SLIGHT, SKINNY, FRESHMAN"	"PUDGY:" JOHNSON "WIRY, LITTLE BOY:" GOLDEN	DESCRIPTION BOYS
WROTE POEM ABOUT MURDER	TURNED TO ADULTS FOR HELP; THEY SUGGESTED HE IGNORE THE ABUSE "I FIGURED SINCE THE PRINCIPAL AND THE DEAN WEREN'T DOING ANYTHING THAT WAS MAKING ANY IMPRESSION, THAT I WAS GONNA HAVE TO DO SOMETHING, OR ELSE I WAS GONNA KEEP ON GETTING PICKED-ON"	BEATING DOG IN YARD SPOKE OFTEN ABOUT VIOLENCE.	TOLD OTHER STUDENTS OF HIS INTENTIONS TO SHOOT-UP THE SCHOOL. WROTE ESSAYS ABOUT REVENGING "PREPS AND JOCKS"	"PUBLICLY VOWED TO KILL ALL THE GIRLS THAT HAD BROKEN UP WITH HIM."	SIGNS THAT ADULTS DIDN'T TAKE SERIOUSLY
	PRINCIPAL: RON EDWARDS, AGE 50 STUDENT: JOHN PALACIOUS: AGE 16.	EX-GIRLFRIEND: CHRISTINA MENEFFEE AND LYDIA DEW, AGE 17 AND PERPETRATOR'S MOTHER: MARY ANN WOODHAM	OBJECT OF UNREQUITED LOVE: NICOLE HADLEY	EX-GIRLFRIEND: CANDACE PORTER, 11-YEARS OLD- DIDN'T GET KILLED, BUT WOUNDED BADLY	NAME OF VIC
		THIRD REICH: THE KROTH SATAN.	GOthic GROUP: THE ZOO CREW, "WEIRD"	THE BLOODS	OUTSIDERS
CHARGED AS AN ADULT; 2 MANDATORY LIFE TERMS	PAROLE IN 52 AND A HALF YEARS; 2 X100 YEAR SENTENCES OR 210 YEARS-CHARGED	3 LIFE SENTNCES AND 140 YEARS; CHARGED AS AN ADULT	GUILTY BUT INSANE; LIFE SENTENCE; AGE 18- MOVED TO ADULT	BOTH CONVICTED OF MURDER; HELD UNTIL AGE 21 IN STATE DETENTION	TRIED AS AD-CHARGES/TIN SERVED

WITHOUT PAROLE	WITH 2 COUNTS OF FIRST DEGREE MURDER, AND 15 COUNTS OF ASSAULT		PRISON, 3 COUNTS MURDER, 6 CHARGES ATTEMPTED MURDER 25-YEAR PAROLE MUST BE 16 TO GET THE DEATH PENALTY	CENTER	
MOTHER TOLD HIM SHE PLANNED TO DIVORCE AND TO COMMIT SUICIDE	FOSTER HOME	FATHER ABANDONED THEM AT AGE 7-95	PARENTS MARRIED	JOHNSON'S PARENTS DIVORCED/ MOTHER WORKING; SHUTTLED BACK AND FORTH BETWEEN PARENTS SINCE EARLY CHILDHOOD	PARENTS
PICKED ON BY ATHLETE	PICKED ON BY ATHLETE	"I AM NOT INSANE I AM ANGRY.. I KILLED BECAUSE PEOPLE LIKE ME ARE MISTREATED EVERYDAY"	TARGETED: "POPULAR PREPPIE STUDENTS" WHO HE BLAMED FOR HIS MISTREATMENT		PREPS AND JOCKS
	NO PLANS FOR METAL DETECTORS ETC	CHRISTY'S LAW: CAPITAL CRIME TO KILL ON SCHOOL PROPERTY	BOOKBAGS AND BACK PACKS FORBIDDEN IN KENTUCKY SCHOOLS	KIDS AS YOUNG AS 11, SHOULD GET THE DEATH PENALTY CLINTON: ZERO-TOLERANCE TOWARDS GUNS GUN CONTROL	POLICIES IMPLEMENT FOLLOWING CRIME

04/24/98	05/19/98	05/21/98	04/20/99	DATE
EDINBORO, PENNSYLVANIA	FAYETTEVILLE, TENNESSEE	SPRINGFIELD, OREGON	LITTLETON, COLORADO	STATE
ANDREW WURST	JACOB DAVIS	KIPLAND KINKEL	ERIC HARRIS AND DYLAN KLEBOLD	NAME
14	18	15	18 AND 19	AGE
TEACHER: 1M "POPULAR SCIENCE TEACHER"	S: 1M	S: 2M PARENTS: 2	S: 12/8F-4M TEACHER: 1M SELF: 2	#KILLED
S: 2 TEACHER: 1		S: 22	S: 23	#WOUNDED
MIDDLE SCHOOL GRADUATION DANCE/LOCAL BANQUET HALL		CAFETERIA / MINUTES BEFORE 8 AM BELL	SCHOOL CAFETERIA 11:15 AM	WHERE
		SATAN	HITLER	IDEOLOGY
JAMES W. PARKER MIDDLE SCHOOL	LINCOLN COUNTY HIGH SCHOOL	THURSTON HIGH SCHOOL/ 1, 500 STUDENTS	COLUMBINE HIGH SCHOOL/ 1, 965 STUDENTS	HIGH SCHOOL # students
	VICTIM DATING EX-GIRLFRIEND	KILLED TWO JOCKS- TORMENTED FOR BEING "SMALL"	RAGE AT RIDICULE BY JOCKS AND PREPS WHO CALLED THEM HOMOSEXUAL	WHY
	"HONOR STUDENT"	LEARNING DISABILITIES/ BUT COMPUTER EXPERTISE	KLEBOLD: "BRIGHT" HARRIS CONSIDERED "SMARTEST KID IN THE CLASS"/ "ARTICULATE AND INTELLIGENT." "EXCELLED IN SCHOOL." "GOOD AT COMPUTERS"/ DEVELOPED EXTRA PROGRAMS FOR DOOM VIDEO GAMES	TYPE STUDENT
	HEARTBREAK KILLED BOYFRIEND OF EX- GIRLFRIEND	HEARTBREAK FELT REJECTED BY A GIRL HE LIKED; FELT SHE WAS THE ONLY PERSON THAT MIGHT LOVE HIM (SEE TEXT)	HEARTBREAK BOTH FELT FRUSTRATED WITH GIRLS. HARRIS REJECTED BY 3 GIRLS FOR PROM. KLEBOLD HADN'T ASKED OUT A GIRL SINCE HE WAS REJECTED IN 10 TH GRADE	RELATIONSHIP WITH GIRL
		GLOCK 9 MM PISTOL RUGER 22 SEMI- AUTOMATIC RIFLE RUGER .22 PISTOL	INTRA TEC-DC9 ASSAULT PISTOL HI-POINT 9MM CARBINE SAVAGE 67H PUMP- ACTION SHOTGUN SAVAGE 311-D 12-GAUGE SHOTGUN. SCATTERED AN ASSORTMENT OF EXPLOSIVE DEVICES THROUGHOUT THE SCHOOL. MANY OF WHICH DID NOT DETONATE. THIRTY EXPLOSIVE DEVICES WERE FOUND ALTOGETHER INCLUDING	WEAPONS USED

			HOMEMADE DEVICES SUCH AS LETHAL PIPE BOMBS, PROPANE-FUELED SHRAPNEL EXPLOSIVES, AND PLASTIC CONTAINERS OF GASOLINE AND SOAP	
STOLE FROM LOCKED CABINET		FIREARMS WERE ALL LEGAL. KIP'S FATHER BOUGHT KIP THE GLOCK AND THE .22 SEMI-AUTOMATIC. POLICE BELIEVE KINKEL STOLE THE .22 PISTOL FROM HIS FATHER. POLICE ALSO FOUND FIVE BOMBS AND FIFTEEN INACTIVE EXPLOSIVES AT KINKEL'S HOUSE, INCLUDING A HAND GRENADE, TWO 155MM HOWITZER CANISTERS, AND WHAT WAS DESCRIBED AS TWO VERY SOPHISTICATED HOMEMADE PIPE BOMBS, INCLUDING A BASKETBALL-TURNED BOMB. KINKEL WAS SUSPENDED THE DAY BEFORE FOR BRINGING A LOADED .32 PISTOL TO SCHOOL. ALL THE GUNS WERE LEGAL FOR A 15-YEAR OLD BOY TO OWN IN OREGON.	SOON AFTER HER 18TH BIRTHDAY IN NOVEMBER 1998, KLEBOLD'S FRIEND, ROBYN ANDERSON, BOUGHT THE TWO SAVAGE SHOTGUNS AND THE HI-POINT 9MM CARBINE AT THE TANNER GUN SHOW LATE ONE NIGHT IN DECEMBER OF 1998 FROM UNLICENSED SELLERS. ANDERSON WAS 18 AND THEREFORE LEGALLY PERMITTED TO MAKE THE PURCHASE, BUT IF IT WAS PROVEN THAT ANDERSON PURCHASED THE GUN SPECIFICALLY FOR SOMEONE ELSE, (HARRIS AND KLEBOLD, FOR INSTANCE), THE TRANSITION WOULD BE CONSIDERED AN ILLEGAL "STRAW PURCHASE." IT COULD NOT BE PROVEN THAT ANDERSON BOUGHT THE GUNS SPECIFICALLY FOR THESE BOYS. AND CONSEQUENTLY, ANDERSON WAS NEVER CONVICTED. KLEBOLD AND HARRIS WERE 17 AT THE TIME, TOO YOUNG TO BUY A GUN. IT WAS THE TANNER GUN SHOW, AFFILIATED WITH	WHERE DID THEY GET THEIR WEAPONS

			THE NRA. THAT REFUSED TO CANCEL ITS EVENT IN COLORADO JUST AFTER THE 1999 MASSACRE. THEY FINALLY AGREED TO REDUCE THE EVENT FROM THREE DAYS TO ONE DAY. THE TANNER SHOW REGULARLY LEASES SPACE AT THE MERCHANDISE MART WHICH IS JUST OUTSIDE DENVER CITY LIMITS. AS A RESULT THE GUN SHOW DOESN'T HAVE TO COMPLY WITH THE CITY'S STRICTER GUN CONTROL LAWS. WHICH BANS SEVERAL ASSAULT WEAPONS. INCLUDING THE TEC-DC9 USED IN THE COLUMBINE SHOOTING HARRIS AND KLEBOLD BOUGHT THE SAWED-OFF TEC-DC9 FROM MARK MANES, A CO-WORKER AT A LOCAL PIZZA SHOP. MANES KNEW THE BOYS WERE TOO YOUNG TO PURCHASE THE ASSAULT PISTOL, BUT SOLD IT TO THEM FOR \$500.00. SAWED-OFF SHOTGUNS ARE ILLEGAL UNDER MOST CIRCUMSTANCES. A POTENTIAL OWNER MUST PAY A LARGER TAX AND REGISTER THE WEAPON. BUT THE AGE LIMIT TO OWN A RIFLE OR SHOTGUN IS 18; FOR A PISTOL, IT IS 21.	
PLANNED SUICIDE, NOT MURDER		ASKED TO BE KILLED	COMMITTED SUICIDE	SUICIDAL
MARIJUANA		PROZAC	HARRIS: LUVOX	MEDICINE DRUG USE
		MARILYN MANSON: DOOM/QUAKE	MARILYN MANSON	MEDIA US
		NIRVANNA	DOOM AND QUAKE/LOST	

		GOthic, GLOOMY, DARK	TO GIRLS	
		SMALL	GOthic	NAMES CALLED
		ANNOUNCED IN CLASS-PLANS TO SHOOT EVERYBODY	MADE VIDEOS PORTENDING THE SHOOTING; THREATENED INDIVIDUAL CLASSMATES IN PERSON; POSTED LISTS OF INTENDED VICTIMS AND THREATS ON THE INTERNET;	THREATS MADE BEFORE SHOOTING
		YES	KLEBOLD: "AS FAR AS I CAN TELL, THIS FAMILY WAS UTTERLY, UTTERLY NORMAL. THEY DID EVERYTHING RIGHT"	WENT TO CHURCH DECLARE NORMAL
		ALWAYS WORE BLACK TRENCH COAT- GOthic ST	BLACK TRENCH COATS	DRESS
		SEE QUOTE in text	HARRIS: I AM NOT CRAZY BOTH WERE LAUGHING AND SEEMED TO BE HAVING A "GREAT TIME" DURING THE SHOOTING.	MADE COMMENT INDICATING THE BOY WAS PROUD OF THE SHOOTING
		RURAL/SURBURB	RURAL SUBURBAN	SUBURBAN: RURAL/ URBAN
		"SMALL AND SKINNY"	KLEBOLD: "LANKY"/ HARRIS: "SLIGHT"	DESCRIPT OF BOYS
		SHOWED ENGLISH CLASS HOW TO MAKE A BOMB; WAS SUSPENDED FOR BRINGING A GUN TO SCHOOL; WROTE AND SPOKE OBSESSIVELY ABOUT VIOLENCE	"IF YOU BUMPED INTO KLEBOLD IN THE HALLWAY, HE'D SAY 'I'LL KILL YOU.'" VIDEO THAT HARRIS AND KLEBOLD MADE FOR CLASS, SHOWING ATTACK ON PREPS AND JOCKS PIPE BOMB FOUND VISIBLE WEAPONS IN BASEMENT	SIGNS THAT ADULTS DIDN'T TAKE SERIOUSLY
			SEE TEXT	NAME OF VICTIM
			JOCKS NAMED THEM THE TRENCHCOAT MAFIA	OUTSIDER
3 RD DEGREE MURDER/ 30-60 YEARS IN PRISON; CHARGED AS AN ADULT.	LIFE/11 AND A HALF YEARS, 4 CHARGES MURDER; 25 CHARGES ATTEMPTED MURDER	112 YEARS PRISON	SUICIDE	TRIED AS ADULT/ CHARGES TIME SERVED
PARENTS FOUGHT AND SAID THEY SEPARATED OVER HOW TO RAISE ANDREW WURST		NUCLEAR FAMILY; FATHER: "MEMBER OF TENNIS CLUB"; "TIGHT-KNIT FAMILY"	BOTH PARENTS MIDDLE-CLASS TWO-PARENT FAMILIES HARRIS' MOTHER: HOME-MAKER KLEBOLD'S FATHER WORKED AT HOME	PARENTS

			FATHER CALLED KLEBOLD HIS BEST FRIEND HARRIS: "TWO PARENTS AT HOME"	
		KILLED TWO "JOCKS"	HATED "JOCKS"	"PREPS AS JOCKS"
		CLINTON: EARLY WARNING SIGNS GUIDE KIDS ARE ARRESTED AND SUSPENDED FOR MAKING ANY THREAT ZERO TOLERANCE FOR GUNS	NRA SCALED DOWN CONFERENCE MANSON CANCELLED CONCERT TOUR CLINTON ASKED HOLLYWOOD TO ADDRESS VIOLENCE IN FILMS. PEOPLE SUING. TRENCH COATS BANNED.	POLICIES IMPLEME AFTER CRIME
		KNOWN TO BE EXCELLENT IN COMPUTERS ALTHOUGH HE HAD LEARNING DIFFICULTIES IN OTHER AREAS	HARRIS: GOOD AT COMPUTERS. CREATED EXTRA PROGRAMS FOR VIDEO GAME: DOOM	COMPUTE EXPERTIS
		KILLED PARENTS	BLAMED PARENTS AND TEACHERS IN NOTE LEFT BEHIND.	PARENTS

05/28/99	02/29/00	03/05/01	DATE
CONYERS, GEORGIA	MOUNT MORRIS TOWNSHIP, MICHIGAN	SANTEE, CALIFORNIA	STATE
THOMAS SOLOMON	Under age; no name available	CHARLES ANDREW WILLIAMS	NAME
15	6	15	AGE
0	S: 1F	S: 2M	#KILLED
S: 6		S: 13	#WOUNDED
INDOOR COMMONS/EARLY MORNING/7:55AM (10 MINUTE SHOOTING) RODE SCHOOL BUS		THE BOYS BATHROOM	WHERE
Boy Scout			IDEOLOGY
HERITAGE HIGH SCHOOL/ 1,300 STUDENTS	BUELL ELEMENTARY SCHOOL	SANTEE HIGH SCHOOL	HIGH SCHOOL/ # STUDENTS
HARASSED BY OTHER STUDENTS ESP. JOCKS	FIGHT WITH 6-YEAR-OLD GIRL	"THE SUBJECT OF CONSTANT HARASSMENT"	WHY
GIRLFRIEND HAD "TURNED CHARMS ON JASON," THE 3 LETTERED JOCK WHO TEASED HIM		BROKE-UP WITH GIRLFRIEND	
DEPRESSED AFTER BREAKING UP WITH GIRLFRIEND			
WAS ACCUSED BY PEERS OF DOING HOMEWORK INSTEAD OF SOCIALIZING			TYPE STUDENT
HEARTBREAK	FIGHT WITH GIRL		RELATIONSHIP WITH GIRLS
ANGRY THAT GIRLFRIEND BROKE-UP WITH HIM			
22 CAL RIFLE AND "LOTS OF GUNS FROM HIS BASEMENT" AND 357 MAGNUM REVOLVER		22 ARMINIUS EIGHT-SHOT REVOLVER	WEAPONS USED
HANDGUN WAS A GIFT FROM HIS PARENTS		TOOK THE HANDGUN FROM HIS FATHER'S LOCKED GUN CABINET.	WHERE DID THEY GET THEIR WEAPONS
STEPFATHER HAD HUGE COLLECTION OF GUNS IN THE BASEMENT-NOT CLEAR THAT SOLOMON USED THESE.			
SUCIDIAL PUT GUN IN MOUTH AT END OF SHOOTING			SUICIDAL
		RITALIN/MARIJUANA AND DRANK ALCOHOL.	MEDICINE/ DRUG USE
MORTAL KOMBAT			MEDIA USED
TUPAC SHAKUR			
NERD		DORK; NERD; SCRAWNY FAGGOT, GAY, PUSSY	NAMES CALLED
TOLD CLASSMATES HE WOULD "BLOW-UP THE CLASSROOM."		REPEATED THREATS TO DO EXACTLY WHAT HE DID. ONE ADULT CONFRONTED WILLIAMS AND TRIED TO CONTACT HIS FATHER, BUT NOTHING HAPPENED TO PREVENT THE SHOOTING	THREATS MADE BEFORE SHOOTING

		TOLD FRIEND HE HAD A LOT OF GUNS AND THAT HE PLANNED TO TAKE THEM TO SCHOOL.	
		TOLD LOTS OF KIDS.	
"HE WAS LITERALLY A BOY SCOUT... WHO WENT TO CHURCH AND DIDN'T CARE FOR GOTH..."		REGULARLY ATTENDS CHURCH "UTTERLY NORMAL GUY" "UPPER-MIDDLE CLASS NEIGHBORHOOD, MOSTLY WHITE"	WENT TO CHURCH/ DECLARED NORMAL
			DRESS
WORE "AN EVIL SMIRK" DURING SHOOTING			MADE COMMENTS INDICATING THE BOY WAS PROUD OF THE SHOOTING
SUBURBAN: "CHILD OF PRIVILEGE"		FARM TOWN/SUBURB	SUBURBAN /RURAL/ URBAN
		"SCRAWNNY," "LITTLE," "SKINNY."	DESCRIPTION OF BOYS
NEIGHBOR COMPLAINED OF BOMBS NEXT DOOR.		BOASTED ABOUT OWNING A GUN	SIGNS THAT ADULTS DIDN'T TAKE SERIOUSLY
			NAME OF VICTIM
			OUTSIDERS
GUILTY BUT MENTALLY ILL. 40 YRS PRISON; 65 YEAR PROBATION CHARGED AS AN ADULT.	BECAUSE OF AGE, NOT CHARGED	2 COUNTS OF MURDER, 13 COUNTS OF ATTEMPTED MURDER, AND 13 COUNTS ASSAULT WITH A FIREARM.	TRIED AS ADULT CHARGED/ TIME SERVED
SPECULATION THAT HE GUNS FROM STEPFATHER AND MOTHER LIVED WITH SISTER, MOTHER, AND STEPFATHER WHO WAS A SALESMAN.		LIVED WITH DIVORCED FATHER	PARENTS
TARGETED AND SHOT TWICE IN THE LEG: JASON CHEEKS, JOCK THAT TEASED HIM AND WHO HIS GIRLFRIEND SEEMED TO BE INTERESTED.			PREPS AND JOCKS

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