"Saving Masculinity:" Gender Reaffirmation, Sexuality, Race, and Parental Responses to Male Child Sexual Abuse

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Using parental responses to male child sexual abuse (CSA) as an example of trauma, I demonstrate how sociologists can use trauma to understand social processes and develop theory. Specifically, I extend the theoretical concept of gender reaffirmation *by shifting the focus from how individuals attempt to reaffirm gender for themselves in these "critical situations" to show how they attempt to reaffirm gender for others after trauma. I interviewed 62 parents on 389 occasions between 2002 and 2007. I use this data to analyze how gender, sexuality, and race intersect over time and shape interpretations of trauma. I argue that the sexual abuse of boys can stir homophobia and, for the black and Puerto Rican participants, heighten anxiety over racial subordination that increases their investment in traditional gender reaffirmation. Last, I discuss the implications of my findings for social science research more generally, and the specific case of male child sexual abuse. Keywords: child sexual abuse, gender, sexuality, race, trauma.*

Although psychologists typically are associated with research on trauma, sociologists also have a long tradition of studying the manner by which trauma impacts routine social relations. Sociologists have captured the character of institutions and social systems in such varied traumatic situations as Nazi concentration camps (Giddens 1979) and, more recently, the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks against the United States (see Alexander et al. 2004). Much of this literature suggests that trauma can unmask the taken-for-granted assumptions and routines in social interaction (Garfinkel 1967). As Anthony Giddens (1979) makes clear: "We can learn a good deal about day-to-day life in routine settings from analyzing circumstances in which those settings are radically disturbed" (p. 123). In other words, "when things fall apart" we learn a lot about structure and agency by observing the ways social actors attempt to put things back together again. In this study I employ trauma as a means for understanding the ways in which masculinities fall apart and, consequently, are reaffirmed by examining parental responses to same-sex, extrafamilial male child sexual abuse.

Although trauma has been effectively used to understand macro-level dynamics, sociologists have not fully utilized trauma as an analytic tool to illuminate micro-level social processes. Some recent scholarship, however, has begun to take this analytic turn. In my work on family trauma (McGuffey 2005a), for instance, I demonstrate how family members extract dominant conceptions of gender, race, and class from the macro world to interpret their personal experiences of trauma. I found that individuals who drew on these socially

sanctioned ideas generally endorsed gender conservatism. This process is referred to as gender reaffirmation. Gender reaffirmation illustrates "the way social actors recuperate after a situation has been interpreted as detrimental, challenging, or stressful to heteronormative gender relations. It rests on the assumption that gender can be 'saved' if it is threatened" (2005a:622).

Although gender is continuously affirmed in peoples' daily interactions in the process of "doing gender" (West and Zimmerman 1987), gender reaffirmation is specifically used to conceptualize how social actors, institutions, and/or components of a social system engage in gender recovery work to ensure that the social organization of gender is maintained if the status quo is perceived as being at risk—that is, the privileging of men and masculinity over women and femininity and certain masculinities over others. Providing empirical evidence about the ways in which gender ideologies are sustained and strategically deployed after a traumatic situation helps social scientists understand how gender hierarchies are maintained despite persistent, and sometimes dramatic, change. This also links the structural components of gender on a macro level to the micro experience of "doing" gender in interpersonal interactions.

Using parental responses to same-sex, male child sexual abuse (CSA) as an example of trauma, I demonstrate how sociologists can use trauma to further extrapolate the mechanics of gender reaffirmation and how gender reaffirmation intersects with sexuality and race. Specifically, I extend the theoretical concept of gender reaffirmation by shifting the focus from how individuals attempt to reaffirm gender for *themselves* (see McGuffey 2005a) in these "critical situations" (Giddens 1987) to show how they attempt to reaffirm gender for *others* in traumatic situations. By concentrating on parental concerns about their sons' sexuality after abuse, I argue that sexual abuse of boys can stir homophobia and, for black and Puerto Rican participants, heighten anxiety over racial subordination that increases their investment in traditional gender reaffirmation. This facilitates a compensatory process of masculine preservation and feminine denigration. Particularly, interpreting child sexual abuse of boys as a threat to gendered and racialized sexuality sanctions the endorsement of hegemonic masculinity (Connell 1995) through athleticism, emotional detachment, the promotion of heterosexuality, and the construction of male space. Other scholars have also suggested that social actors compensate for a perceived lack, or loss, of masculine privilege by attending to the structural building blocks of hegemonic masculinity (Chen 1999; Connell 1987).

"Doing" Sexuality and Making Men

Sociologists often view sexuality as a set of behaviors that are socially learned, culturally acquired, and cognitively interpreted (Connell 1987, 1995; Gagnon and Simon 1973; Kimmel 1987, 1994; Messner 1992). Sexuality is not static. Its meanings and expressions change over time, fluctuate throughout an individual's life course, and act as reification for other social identities such as gender and race (Almaguer 1995; Collins 2004; Roberts 1997; Wilkins 2004). In this view, sexuality is not simply a manifestation of sexual impulse. Sexuality is more accurately described as a social control mechanism for defining *how, where, when,* and *with whom* one should be sexual. As such, knowledge of the dominant social interpretations of erotic desire and behavior, known as sexual scripts (Gagnon and Simon 1973), is important. Sexual scripts not only guide action and organize our interpretation of behavior, but they also validate actions that fortify social norms and invalidate deviations from that norm.

Although many scholars suggest that sexuality and gender are analytically discrete and operate in different ways for different people depending on their other status characteristics (Connell 1987, 1995; Kimmel 1987, 1994; Messner 1992), sexuality is often intimately coupled with the performance of gender in popular culture (Schwartz and Rutter 1998). As a process, gender and sexuality are accomplishments that must be continually reinforced and

performed in specific settings (West and Zimmerman 1987). The performance of both is achieved in social interaction and cannot be reduced to essentialized notions of biologically predetermined behaviors or roles. As a fundamental aspect of the social infrastructure, these identities are "learned and achieved at the interactional level, reified at the cultural level, and institutionally enforced via the family" (Gagne, Tewksbury, and McGaughey 1997: 479), and vary by race (Collins 2004; Wilkins 2004).

Research on subaltern masculinities (e.g., men of color, gay men, poor/working-class men, etc) recognizes that sexual and gender development among African American and Puerto Rican boys and men[1] is marked by racial subordination (Davis 2001; Harper 2007; Torres 1998).[2] The gender and sexual performances of blacks and Puerto Ricans have been maligned by more powerful groups to rationalize ethno-racial oppression. Nonetheless, empirical evidence suggests that racial minorities also negatively assess the sexual morality of whites, often pairing whites with the very sexually demoralizing stereotypes that plague communities of color (Wilkins 2004). Some scholars suggest that this is a strategy of resistance—"a means of asserting a morally superior public face to the dominant society" (Espiritu 2001:416).[3]

As a consequence, many researchers suggest that African Americans and Puerto Ricans may perpetuate troublesome heteronormative gender and sexual relations that emphasize—and exaggerate—male domination and heterosexuality as a way to ward off stereotypes of black and Latino inferiority (Collins 2004; Crenshaw 1991; Wilkins 2004). As some scholars suggest, part and parcel to this racialized performance is the sociohistorical construction of people of African descent—including Puerto Ricans who are often phenotypically, politically, and culturally aligned with blacks in the United States (Priestley 2007; Wilkins 2004)—as essentially heterosexual and whites as more prone to same-sex sexual orientations (Collins 2004; Somerville 2000; Thomas 1997). This theoretical narrative suggests that blacks, as well as other members of society, internalize these ideological tropes that link blackness to heterosexuality and homosexuality to whiteness. This racial ideology allows black and Puerto Rican masculinities to strike a "hegemonic bargain" (Chen 1999), where they can trade on the privileges accrued by this racially essentialized notion of heterosexuality to help offset some of the other negative images of black and Puerto Rican masculinities. In a society that still denigrates nonheterosexualities, this may be one of the few advantages blacks and Puerto Ricans can possess as a group. In order to be perceived as authentically black or Puerto Rican, then, means accomplishing heterosexuality (Thomas 1997; Williams 1997).

Sexual Threat and Parental Responses to Child Sexual Abuse

Like all forms of CSA, the prevalence of male child sexual abuse is hotly debated (see McGuffey 2005b; Miller-Perrin and Perrin 1999). Estimates of male CSA are as high as 29 percent for noncontact forms of abuse; a more restrictive classification that requires anal penetration lowers the rate to 14 percent. The majority of these males are abused by other males. These numbers suggest that male same-sex CSA is a pressing social problem.

Research suggests that parents of (known) sexually abused boys express concern over their child's developing sexual and gender identities (Arey 1995; Deblinger and Heflin 1996; Miller-Perrin and Perrin 1999; Watkins and Bentovim 1992). Carl Rogers and Thomas Terry

1. Black and Puerto Rican participants make up the "people of color" category in this study. Hence, my discussion on subaltern masculinities is focused on this literature.

2. For example, in a racially stratified society such as the United States, attributes that are typically associated with masculinity more generally—aggression, competitiveness, homophobia, and misogyny to name a few—are viewed as more dangerous and egregious when performed by black and Puerto Rican boys and men (see Torres 1998; Westwood 1990; Wilkins 2004).

3. I would like to thank an anonymous reviewer for directing me to this observation.

(1984) claim that parents of male victims of same-sex child abuse regularly minimize the abuse, blame the child, and/or have fears that the child may be gay. This exacerbates the child's anxiety. These responses are associated with the parents' own homophobic behaviors. If the son is in middle to late childhood, parents may assume that the son is gay and feel that he "asked for it" since boys are thought to be able to take care of themselves. Bill Watkins and Arnon Bentovim (1992) state that homophobic parents "with these fears may implicitly or explicitly reinforce antisocial behavior on the part of their sons" (p. 236). It is suggested that this can lead to intense homophobia among male CSA survivors, violent attempts to reaffirm masculinity, and stressful relationships with girls/women and boys/men throughout the lifespan (Dhaliwal et al. 1996; Rogers and Terry 1984; Watkins and Bentovim 1992).

Already marked by racial subordination, parents of color often fear that the stigma of child sexual abuse may compound prejudice against their children. As such, the interpretations of trauma by families of color are greatly influenced by their marginalized positions in society.[4] For parents of color, then, child sexual abuse can heighten concerns for both the performance of gender and increased racial marginalization (Abney and Priest 1995; Comas-Diaz 1995; Wyatt 1990).

Little is actually known about parents of sexually abused children in general, parents of boys in particular, and even less about parents of color. Of the studies that examine child sexual abuse, most ignore the differing strategies within households (e.g., mothers and fathers) and between them (e.g., white and "of color" households). Those who are external to the victim are grouped together and their responses are too often assessed singularly. In addition, while these studies address the victim's stigmatization they do not examine how the parents themselves experience stigma and how parents say this stigma polices their behavior. Further, parental responses to CSA have not been theorized or connected to the social organization of sexuality, gender, and race. This work attends to these limitations through multiple, intensive interviews with parents of sexually abused sons over several years, using the data to show how parents interpret their child's sexual stigma, and conceptualizing parental responses to sexual stigma as a form of gender reaffirmation.

Methodology

Study Participants

I conducted multiple, in-depth interviews between 2002 and 2007 with 62 parents who voluntarily enrolled sons in a group therapy program for sexually abused boys (see Table 1). I refer to this organization as the Children's Center. The 36 boys at the Children's Center were between 8 and 11 years of age when they first entered the program. Neighbors, babysitters, family friends, and others who came in contact with the family molested the boys. Family members (e.g., uncles) sexually abused some boys, but members within the household abused no children. The boys met in eight cluster groups of eight to ten boys.[5] The groups met once a week for two months. The parents themselves did not receive any therapy.

Families learned about the Children's Center in a variety of ways: referrals from doctors, friends, telephone directories, churches, social workers, and other state agencies. All the parents had at least a college degree, lived in a Northeastern urban city, and had a son enrolled

4. Other research refers to this process as a racial appraisal (McGuffey 2005b; Sharpe 2007), which examines how and why trauma victims construct their interpretations of trauma when there is already an excess of stigma due to their racially marginalized positions in the social order. The concept of racial appraisal illuminates the dual interlocking processes of culture and structure in trauma interpretation for people of color.
5. Confidentiality prohibits too much detail about the children and parents in this study.

Table 1 • *Participant Characteristics by Race/Ethnicity, Marital Status, Number of Interviews Per Person, and Household Income By Year*

Phase One

Pseudonyms	Interviews	Household Income 2002/2007	Pseudonyms	Interviews	Household Income 2002/2007
White Married Couples			*White Married Couples*		
Beth	7	$97,000/$92,000	Iris	9	$127,000/$153,000
Paul	3		Lee	5	
Blanche	9	$92,000/$134,000	Jennifer	7	$59,000/$71,000
Miles	5		Jim	4	
Christine	4	$99,000/$124,000	Judy	9	$76,000/$84,000
David	3		Steven	3	
Clara	9	$64,000/$77,000	Katherine	7	$83,000/$89,000
Rich	4		Lewis	3	
Dorothy	9	$119,000/$127,000	Maria	9	$69,000/$74,000
Raymond	4		Luke	4	
Eileen	9	$71,000/$80,000	Melissa	9	$77,000/$98,000
Collin	4		John	4	
Greta	9	$111,000/$102,000	Pam	7	$66,000/$77,000
Stuart	4		Jeff	3	
Heather	7	$122,000/$101,000	Rose	9	$86,000/$102,000
Michael	3		Philip	9	
Black Married Couple			*Puerto Rican Married Couple*		
Vivian	10	$103,000/$153,000	Marianna	9	$116,000/$141,000
Darrel	9		Carlos	9	
White Single Mothers			*Black Single Mothers*		
Alice	8	$39,000/$50,000	Estelle	10	$94,000/$105,000
Amanda	9	$61,000/$67,000	Josephine	10	$74,000/$85,000
Bridget	9	$56,000/$64,000			
Gloria	9	$43,000/$56,000			
LeAnne	9	$41,000/$52,000			
Stacey	8	$41,000/$54,000			
Stephanie	9	$85,000/$111,000			
Sylvia	9	$66,000/$76,000			

Phase Two

Pseudonyms	Interviews	Household Income 2004/2007	Pseudonyms	Interviews	Household Income 2004/2007
Black Married Couples			*Black Married Couples*		
Audrey	6	$123,000/137,000	Mariah	4	$127,000/$141,000
William	6		Torrance	4	
Berna	4	$109,000/$117,000	Monica	4	$123,000/$135,000
Maurice	4		Brian	4	
Damita	4	$132,000/$226,000	Natasha	4	$81,000/$92,000
Ray	4		Kenneth	4	
Keisha	4	$97,000/$107,000	Norah	4	$73,000/$81,000
Mason	4		Elijah	4	

in the organization's group therapy program. In 2002, household income ranged from $39,000 to $132,000. By the last time I interviewed participants in 2007, household income had increased and ranged from $50,000 to $226,000. I also asked participants about the income and class backgrounds of their parents. Whereas as all of the white participants had middle class parents, all of the black and Puerto Rican parents grew up in poor or working class communities. The 62 parents included eight white single mothers, two black single mothers, sixteen white married couples, nine black married couples, and one Puerto Rican married couple. When I refer to specific respondents in this study, I identify their race, marital status, and gender in that order as follows: W = white, B = black, P = Puerto Rican, M = married, S = single, W = woman, and M = man. For example, a white single woman will be represented as (WSW). All names in this study are pseudonyms.

Data Collection

Phase One. I collected the data in two different phases between 2002 and 2007. In Phase One, I had an assistantship at this therapy program that required basic intake skills typically associated with social services and other low-wage "helping" occupations such as oral, word processing, and data collection proficiency. As an assistant I was responsible for managing case records for social workers, updating service pamphlets, and administering the entrance and exit interviews of parents who had sons in the program. Although I was required to administer the entrance and exit interviews, I had a very behind-the-scene role as worker for this organization. I did not provide therapeutic guidance to parents, and I was not responsible for evaluating progress or compliance to therapeutic goals.

I knew most of the staff, social workers, and therapists both personally and professionally before I started the research project. Therefore, gaining access to the Children's Center was not difficult; and I was a welcome addition to the therapeutic team when a research assistantship became available. I immediately identified my academic interests to the members of the organization and suggested that this would be a fascinating research project to explore. They agreed. After hiring me for the position and obtaining permission from the organization's Internal Review Board, I was allowed to interview parents, and not children, on numerous occasions for the purposes of research beyond the therapeutic intent of the Children's Center.

Parents were aware of my dual role at the outset of the study. It was made clear that these interviews were strictly voluntary, participants had to give consent for every interview, and respondents were free to refuse participation at any time. This is evidenced by the variability in the number of interviews per subject and the fact that a number of the interviews took place after the parents' children were no longer in the program. Many interviews took place years after the children were no longer in therapy. There did not appear to be any significant blurring of boundaries between my roles as worker and researcher due to my limited involvement as worker with the participants. The respondents generally came to see me as a confidant rather than a representative of the organization. After giving a very critical appraisal of the program, for example, one mother said, "I feel like I can trust you and you won't think badly about me because I don't believe everything that [the Children's Center] wants me to think . . . I feel like I can be all of me." I solicited all parents in Phase One for participation in this project. Forty-six participants were identified and a 100 percent response rate was obtained along with written permission to participate.

Phase Two. There were only six people of color in Phase One: two black single mothers, a married African American couple, and a Puerto Rican household. Although the number of racial/ethnic minorities was small, I noticed important differences between them and whites. This prompted Phase Two of my data collection. In order to increase the racial diversity of my participants, I went back to the Children's Center two years later in 2004 as a nonemployee

and only solicited the participation of families of color. Sixteen parents of color (eight black married couples) out of a total of 76 parents were identified. All sixteen parents agreed to participate. I used the same interview schedules from Phase One. The interviews in Phase Two did not differ significantly in depth, content, or themes from those in the previous phase. This further suggests that my assistantship during Phase One had little to no effect on the type of data collected.

Conducting the Interviews. I interviewed parents jointly as well as individually. Parents were informed that both their joint and individual interviews would be used for research purposes. There were some differences in how parents responded and what details they were willing to give in joint versus individual interviews in the overall project. For the focus of this article, however, what stood out was the remarkable consistency between interviews of particular participants as well as between mothers and fathers. Many interviews took place at the therapeutic center. As I got to know participants and started developing a degree of trust, however, a number of them were completed off site (e.g., in the homes of participants and parent-organized social gatherings). All of the interviews that were completed after the children were no longer in the program were done outside of the Center's setting.

I had an evolving, relaxed, open-ended interview schedule that encouraged participants to respond in a conversational manner. I generally asked very broad questions such as: How are you doing today? How is your spouse handling the sexual abuse situation? How is your son reacting to [said parenting strategy]? These sorts of queries were asked in every interview and allowed me to trace changes over time as well as overall patterns. Probing questions were used to get at gendered differences in behavior and the rationale for those differences from respondents. Probing questions were also used if participants offered information about their current parenting strategy and how it differed from their past approaches. Amendments to the interview schedule were added to subsequent interviews when new themes emerged from past interviews (see "analysis" section below).

The in-depth interviews lasted from thirty minutes to four hours. Although I sought all participants equally for interviews, mothers came to the Center much more often and were more agreeable to meeting outside of the therapeutic setting. As a result, I have more interviews per subject for women than for men. I interviewed six fathers on three occasions each; fourteen fathers on four occasions; two fathers on five occasions; one father on six occasions; and three fathers on nine occasions. In comparison, I interviewed eight mothers on four occasions each; one mother on six occasions; five mothers on seven occasions; two mothers on eight occasions; seventeen mothers on nine occasions; and three mothers on ten occasions. These numbers include both joint and individual interviews. In all, I conducted a total of 389 interviews. The fact that the children's therapy sessions met once a week and I was available during these times helped facilitate the number of interviews per subject. The repeated interview technique also allowed me to develop rapport with participants. As Kathryn Edin (2000:115) suggests, data compiled from "in-depth, repeated, qualitative interviews" is more reliable than data that is based on single interviews with respondents. Data was also gathered from the workbook that the therapists used, training guides given to researchers, and observations at the Children's Center.

Analysis

Interviews were transcribed and I used an analytic-inductive process to organize the data (Miles and Huberman 1984). This process included data reduction (the technique of identifying themes), data display (clustering the data for conclusion derivation), and conclusion drawing (the process of making sense of the data). The clustering of themes emerged from the data and were not predetermined organizational categories. Once themes emerged from

the data, the repeated and evolving interview technique allowed me to return to the themes with participants, thereby enabling me to constantly check my developing ideas with the interviewees, and often prompting new themes to surface.

The interviews were coded and grouped into approximately thirty general themes and subthemes. The findings are neither objective "facts" nor simply subjective interpretations (Glaser 1992; Glaser and Strauss 1967). Furthermore, I do not insist that the participants' stated beliefs drive behavior. Rather, the accounts provide a way of understanding how parents say they make meaning of extrafamilial CSA of boys and the social schemas they used in that meaning-making process.

Since self-report studies suggest that most CSA victims do not disclose the abuse and a number of parents in the general population may be unaware that their son has been abused (Watkins and Bentovim 1992), my findings cannot be generalized to all who have been sexually abused, either extrafamilial or intrafamilial. This, though, is not my concern. My purpose is to set the stage for an intellectual agenda that systematically examines the perceptions of those close to trauma victims. In other words, I show how macro understandings of sexuality, gender, and race are used to interpret the micro experience of trauma.

Findings

Gender reaffirmation dominated my interviews but the group therapy in which these parents' children participated espoused an alternative interpretation. Most perpetrators of sexual abuse are men and social science research often identifies parental concerns over their sons' sexuality. In short, parents and caregivers of known sexually abused boys frequently fear that same-sex CSA can lead to homosexuality. The group work currently under discussion advocates that the connection between male CSA and homosexuality is suspicious. While there are some studies that attempt to link boys who have been sexually molested to future homosexuality (Paul et al. 2001), causality cannot be deduced from these limited studies. Many researchers suggest that the connection is, at best, unclear and unlikely to lead to permanent changes in sexuality (Arey 1995; Finkelhor 1984; Newton 1978). The Children's Center tells parents that sexuality is a fluid process and that all forms of sexual expression are valid as long as they are between consenting adults. In any case, there is no attempt to "fix" or identify same-sex attraction at the Children's Center unless it is being forced onto another individual.

Given both the emphasis of the Children's Center and the fact that these participants voluntarily enrolled their children in this particular program—fully aware of its progressive, anti-homophobic policies—one *might* assume that parents would use CSA as an occasion to talk about family within this progressive framework. Indeed, as I show below, only two households adopt the framework. Even with the progressive readings of sexuality that the Children's Center provides, traditional gender reaffirmation triumphs.

The findings are separated into four sections to highlight the process of gender reaffirmation. First, I address the few parents who adhere to the progressive ideology of their sons' therapeutic program. The second section demonstrates the ways most fathers champion gender reaffirmation by emphasizing athleticism, emotional detachment, and promoting heterosexuality. Mothers also have a stake in heterosexual reproduction and endorse gender reaffirmation. The third section takes up this issue and reveals that although mothers *say* gender reaffirmation of sons is primarily men's responsibility, women, too, actively participate in the process. I also analyze the differing strategies of married and single mothers.

Whereas the second and third sections underscore gender differences within households, the last draws attention to racial differences between them. The black and Puerto Rican parents consistently argue that the way they raise their sexually abused sons is different from

whites. Their accounts suggest that race is deployed as a discursive strategy to justify gender reaffirmation and validate their reliance on hegemonic masculinity.

Progressive Parenting: "Why Would I Want to Raise a Traditional Son? That Would Oppress Me."

While most parents participated in gender reaffirmation, one two-parent and one single-mother household resisted. Rationales for a liberal interpretation of CSA drew heavily on the progressive agenda articulated by the Children's Center and its staff. Rationales for resistance are entwined with homophobia and sexism and often overlapped. Still, two rationales for resistance were identified: that intrinsic homophobia of hegemonic masculinity is oppressive to many men, and hegemonic masculinity is oppressive to women. I'll present two cases to embody these strategies.

Philip (WMM) rejects many of the tenets of gender reaffirmation. He feels pressure from family members, friends, and even coworkers, who suggest that he's not doing enough to warrant his son's heterosexuality and proper performance of masculinity. A former college athlete himself, Philip initially signed his son up for football because he worried about his son's sexual identity. His rejection of gender traditionalism, nonetheless, filtered out the opinions of others, and he no longer "pushes" his son into athleticism. Instead, he encourages emotive behavior and denounces women's objectification. He believes he would be a hypocrite if he condoned gender traditionalism. Although Philip identifies as heterosexual, he admitted to having an off-and-on sexual relationship with a same-sex friend throughout high school. He emphasized: "I know from personal experience that being with a man won't necessarily turn you gay. I mean, I was with one voluntarily and homosexuality didn't take in me." He also sees homophobia as being oppressive to boys and men. It is stereotypes of masculinity, he argued, that oppress his son in the first place:

> If the world wasn't worried about my son being straight my son would probably not have to deal with it either. He should be more concerned with dealing with all the violation issues. But the world has got him concerned about being manly. It's oppressive. Why would I want to raise a traditional son? That would oppress him and me. Him, because society fears homosexuality. If society didn't fear homosexuality so much, [my son] would not fear that he was less of a man because of this. Me, because I had that thing with a guy in high school. It's the thought of not being a "real man" or "man enough" that overwhelms all men.

Although the other two parents who took on this form of resistance were not as articulate in their analysis as Philip, they identified gender hierarchies among men as a reason to reject reaffirmation. Since their sons were marginalized due to their same-sex sexual abuse, resistance was an attempt to deconstruct hegemonic norms. By "taking maleness apart," stated Philip, "I pray [my son] learns maleness in a way that does not make him feel less than a man."

Gloria (WSW) believes that reaffirmation norms oppress women. However, she is compelled to confront reaffirmation because "people are always telling you how to raise your son, especially if they know he's been molested . . . If you encourage him to be artistic instead of a macho man, people are going to talk about you, and not in a good way." Nonetheless, she resists. To adhere to these standards, she argued, would subjugate her as a woman:

> If I teach [my son] to be an "all-American boy" I would be teaching him that he is better than women, that he is more important than them. He's going to get enough of that in school and from other kids in the neighborhood. He's certainly not going to get it from home.

Her articulations suggest that gender reaffirmation valorizes men and degrades women. She also perceives that these concepts are enforced and encouraged via institutions (e.g., school) and interpersonal interactions (e.g., with others in the community). Her approach suggests

that both macro and micro forces reinforce reaffirmation and direct social life. These social forces collude to oppress women. For these reasons, Gloria never stated that traditional forms of masculinity are desirable for her son or for herself. Those parents who did resist the heteronormativity and sexist aspects of gender reaffirmation generally had more flexible ideas about sexuality and gender. This supports other studies suggesting that people with nontraditional ideas about gender are less likely to have negative attitudes about homosexuality, while those who fear homosexuality are more likely to have conservative gender expectations (Lehne 1995; Minnigerode 1976).

Men and Masculinity

All of the other parents believed that their son required extra intervention on the part of the father or stepfather since a man had sexually abused him.[6] As Michael (WMM) explained:

> Any child, boy or girl, who is molested is a horrible, horrible thing. But the fact that these are boys just makes it worse. How do we explain this to them? I got a lot of correction to make up for.

When asked how they would feel if it had been a daughter who was sexually abused, all the fathers said they would also want to spend more time with daughters. Spending more time with their sexually abused child may be a generic response to trauma. *How* fathers spent their time with their child, however, is a gendered process. For instance, most agreed that the sexual abuse of a son is more devastating because it threatens traditional sexual scripts that constitute heteronormative gender relations (which will be explained in more detail below). Fear of homosexuality seemed to eclipse other issues associated with CSA for all fathers, except Philip who I discussed in the previous section. Three of the strategies for gender reaffirmation included athleticism, emotional detachment, and the promotion of heterosexuality. These forms of gender reaffirmation are in alignment with what other theorists have identified as being crucial to the maintenance of masculinity in both adulthood (Bird 1996) and childhood (McGuffey and Rich 1999).

Athleticism: "Nothing Like a Good Pounding to Turn a Boy Into a Man."

Only two fathers, on one occasion each, discussed sport as a generic confidence building strategy. Even so, these two fathers used several interviews, over several years, to talk about sport as a way to encourage hegemonic forms of masculinity. All other fathers continually justified their enthusiasm for sport because it helped encourage boys to compete against other boys. As a result of these boys being dominated by their abusers, most fathers felt that their son needed to learn to dominate. Although sport participation may be normal for boys of this age, parents articulated that it was specifically used as a remedy for same-sex CSA. According to many parents, boys needed to assert aggression over other males so that their sons did not lose their rights to masculinity. Luke (WMM) noted that "intimidation is important for boys . . . I don't want my son to get punked out." Jeff (WMM), a stepfather of a CSA victim, stated:

> I don't want [my son] to be pushed around by other boys . . . He needs to know that just because a man pushed him around and forced him to do things he didn't want to do [being sexually violated], he can be strong, too.

6. Although fathers often said that they should be spending more time with their sons, very few acted on this belief. Moreover, most fathers could have taken advantage of job leaves, but only six fathers did (one white, one Puerto Rican, and four black), and three did so because they were, more or less, forced by family members to do so.

Raymond (WMM) concurred:

> I don't want my son to be a bully or anything, but he needs to learn to take care of himself. This sexual abuse issue has him feeling powerless . . . because of this abuse he has to be taught how to be a man again . . . Unfortunately that means learning how to protect yourself, sometimes even being aggressive and outright mean.

According to John (WMM), who claimed to speak for other fathers of sexually abused boys with whom he had communicated:

> We've talked about the sexual abuse thing and those I've talked to want their sons to know that they are not powerless . . . Our sons, too, can wield power over others. We hope to teach them this through competition. This [child sexual abuse] will not stop them from growing up into men.

As most fathers articulated, competition is central to constructing masculinities and many scholars have noted the importance of competition among boys and men as a way to confer masculinity and separate one's self from femininity (Beutel and Marini 1995; Bird 1996; Connell 1987, 1995; Messner 1992).

Parents thought sports were a good avenue to correct the assumed damage to their sons' gendered sexuality. Fathers, in particular, viewed sports as activities that would protect their sons from homosexuality and feminization. Lewis (WMM) stated:

> Signing [my son] up for baseball was definitely a good idea. Being around other normal boys—you know, boys that have not been molested and are, therefore, not going to be influenced by this gay thing—will lead him in the right direction.

For Lewis and other fathers, the "wrong" direction is homosexuality. Steven (WMM), who signed his son up for football after the abuse, further illustrated this point:

> Sports are good, because it stops boys from being too soft. That may be good for some kids, but boys who have been damaged in this way need an extra dose of testosterone [he laughs]. Nothing like a good pounding to turn a boy into a man.

Michael (WMM), a former self-proclaimed high school star athlete, identified the institution of sport as an area where peers actively construct heterosexual masculinity: "Playing sports helped me define myself as a man. I learned what it meant to be masculine." "I think all boys need sports," stated Jim (WMM), "but I think these boys need it more than other boys. Sports are a way they can come back to manhood." It is interesting, though, that Jim did not play organized sports at any point in his life. Still, he contends: "It's necessary for [my son] because he was abused sexually by another man."

Michael (WMM) went on to explain that masculinity included "how to be respected, strong, competitive, and confident with the opposite sex . . . Being an athlete gets you lots of female attention. That's always good for a boy's growth and self-esteem." Like others, Michael made a solid link between competitive sport, heterosexuality, and masculinity. It is this link that encouraged parents to involve their sexually abused sons in sports. Organized sport is a mechanism to encourage and sustain heterosexuality and to reestablish hegemonic norms of masculinity (Messner 1988, 1992, 2001; McGuffey and Rich 1999). Approximately half of the parents interviewed reported that their son was active in a sport before the abuse. Post-abuse athletic involvement increased to three-fourths.

Emotional Detachment: "He's Got Too Many Emotions. He Feels Too Much."

With the exception of Philip, all fathers expressed that emotions typically associated with femininity (e.g., compassion and being responsive to the needs of others) were not condoned. Being "too emotional" signified weakness and endangered their sons' masculinities. Fathers felt emotional passivity was particularly dangerous in conjunction with their sons' abuse. As David (WMM) claimed:

> In our society today we try to "baby" boys too much now. Now, boys are too nice and passive. That might be one of the reasons [our son's abuser] picked him. [The abuser] saw weakness in our son because he's got too many emotions. He feels too much . . . [The abuser] probably thought our son was possibly a faggot in the making. I try to teach [our son] to be tough now so that he won't get pushed around.

Fathers emphasized that emotional detachment was necessary for their sons to associate with other boys. While athleticism was viewed as a way to help their sons manage the recovery process by inspiring competition, emotional detachment was seen as a way to help integrate their sons into masculine realms. Boys who are not emotionally detached are ostracized and, as one father declared, likely to be perceived as "girly, or even worse, gay." As William (BMM) claimed:

> I'm afraid [my son] is going to be perceived as a wimp. He's just too soft. Other boys probably won't want to hang around him because he doesn't know how to be masculine anymore. They might think he's gay and not associate with him. I need to help him downplay his sensitive side and up-play his aggressive, man side. That way he won't be made fun of and will be able to connect with other boys.

The censure of emotional attachment, especially same-sex emotional attachment, was a central strategy deployed by many fathers to aid in the gender recovery process. Collin's (WMM) account about his sexually abused son, Chris, and the abused son's interaction with his younger, nonabused brother, Rubin, is illustrative of this strategy:

> Chris used to always cuddle with Rubin when Rubin was scared of the dark or Rubin thought there were monsters under his bed. I had to get Chris away from that . . . Chris was being too wimpy and was turning his brother into a wuss, too. Now, when Rubin wants to get all girly with Chris I send Rubin to his mother. It's okay for Rubin right now because he's only four. But Chris is eleven. He needs to learn to be tougher and teach his little brother to be a man and stop being scared all the time. He's already been made into a woman sexually, I can't let him turn into one emotionally, too!

Masculinity is equated with emotional detachment and is the opposite of anything associated with femininity, including sexual exploitation. The reticence surrounding emotions associated with femininity is more than just constructing individual masculinities in these sexually abused boys. Emotional detachment maintains gender hierarchies by valorizing emotional aloofness as an "essentially" masculine trait and linking emotional intimacy with feminine weakness. These fathers expect this emotional reserve will help secure their sons' "rights" to the privileges of heterosexual men.

Promoting Heterosexuality: "My Son Likes Girls and I . . . Make Sure It Stays That Way."

Most parents said that they did not talk explicitly about sex before abuse was uncovered, but this changed.[7] All of the gender reaffirming parents' new sexual talk promoted heterosexuality. Miles (WMM) who purposely commented on the "large-breasted, scantily clad [female character]" of one of his son's favorite video games, stated:

> Every time [my son] plays that game I'll make some side comment about her breasts or something. Nothing over the top or anything, but I want to encourage him to take notice of women . . . I pray that this sexual abuse thing doesn't have him too messed up.

Paul (WMM) noted:

> I always ask[s] my son if he's got a girlfriend at school. He's ten [years old] now and he's never had a girlfriend . . . and it might be because of the sexual abuse. I want to steer him, you know, towards

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7. It is interesting to note that the three parents who said they did talk explicitly about sex pre-abuse are the one's identified as progressive parents.

girls because I think what has happened to him [the sexual abuse] has stunted his sexual maturity. So I, you know, get him to look at girls. I hate to admit it, but I even left a Playboy magazine out for him to accidentally find.

Elijah (BMM) was even more explicit:

My son likes girls, and I keep an eye out to make sure it stays that way. I ask if his girlfriend is the prettiest girl in school because he needs to know he can compete with other boys for girls. This sexual abuse thing doesn't mean my son is any less of a man, . . . and I just want to make sure he can compete with the best of them . . . whether it be sports, girls, whatever.

The promotion of heterosexuality was in conjunction with the condemnation of any same-sex affection. Lee (WMM) said he continually monitored his son's same-sex affections "so that [my son] will know that men are not supposed to touch each other." Jim discussed how he had to teach his son" not to hold [his little brother's] hand anymore because [his son] had to learn that men just don't touch each other, or at least they shouldn't. Men should only be touching girls." Incidents such as this were common.

These parents view sexuality and gender as inextricably linked, and interpret the linkage through a heterosexual lens. In this way, heterosexuality is deployed to foster masculinity. "Doing heterosexuality," as Michael Messner (2001) notes, is a social construction that is not automatically allied to sexual acts, but part of one's identity that is enacted to enforce hegemonic masculinity. This highlights masculinity as a process of accomplishment and a resource that must be won and secured (Connell 1987, 1995).

Mothers and Masculinity

All of the gender reaffirming mothers also expressed trepidation over their sons' developing gendered sexuality. As a whole, though, mothers were less explicit in their homosexual anxieties and talked about it less frequently as compared to fathers. In fact, some mothers talked about the issue only in relation to their husbands' actions or in joint interviews with their husbands. Some mothers even challenged their husbands' blatant homophobic behaviors because, as one mother put it, fathers "take it too far." This should not be interpreted, however, as mothers being less invested in their sons' (hetero)sexual development. Marital status facilitates mothers' strategic participation in gender reaffirmation. Married mothers helped construct male space and some reported their sons' nonmasculine behavior to their husbands with the intention that their husbands would address and correct the (perceived) inapt behavior. Most single mothers outsourced gender reaffirmation to men.

Married Mothers: "We Have to Do Our Part in Saving Masculinity."

Married mothers appeared less involved in gender recovery than fathers and single mothers because they mainly depended on husbands to "fix" their sons' allegedly damaged heterosexual development. Therefore, they talked much less about it. Nevertheless, their gender recovery work and investment in heterosexuality is evident. Most married mothers, like Heather (WMW), felt that:

these sexually molested boys need more time with their fathers to help them with this sex thing. A boy needs a father to teach him how to be a man. But, as mothers, we have to do our part in saving masculinity. So I try to provide them the space and time to do, you know, guy things. So I try to adjust my time so that they can be alone.

"Guy things" included sports, uninterrupted playtime, and other male-dominated activities such as the Boy Scouts. To make sure fathers and sons had time together, married mothers

reduced their paid labor force participation and/or took on more domestic tasks so that their husbands could do less and spend the extra time with their sons.[8]

Married mothers also reported that they told their husbands when sons acted in ways that were deemed inappropriate for their gender. Married mothers felt that fathers were better prepared to deal with the gender transgressions of sons due to the assumption that fathers "just know how to handle boys." Although both mothers and fathers claimed that fathers should spend more time with their sexually abused sons, mothers still spent significantly more time with sons and shouldered the majority of childcare responsibilities. Mothers, therefore, witnessed more of their sons' behaviors. Beth (WMW) illustrated this point by explaining how she reported her son's behavior to her husband Paul (WMM):

> I do a lot for [our son] . . . I've gone from full-time work to part time and I try to do a little more around the house so that Paul can spend more time with [our son]. Not that Paul did very much anyway. But our son needs all the extra time with his father that he can get. It's just important. They need "guy" time . . . When [our son] starts doing things that are a result of the sexual abuse, like being too effeminate with his mannerisms or anything like that, I tell Paul so he can deal with it. When it comes to manhood and the like I leave it to his dad. He can deal with it better because he's male. They've got that connection. His father can teach him that these effeminate behaviors are not appropriate for boys.

Married mothers participate in the construction of hegemonic masculinity by asserting that behaviors that are perceived to be effeminate are not "appropriate" for boys. This reifies stereotypes that construct and maintain heteronormative gender relations.

Single Mothers: "I Depend on My Brother to Show Him the Way."

Single mothers, like their married counterparts, believe that their sexually abused sons need to spend more time with men to ensure heterosexual gender development. Unlike married mothers they could not depend on their sons' fathers because they had very little contact with them, these fathers did not even know that their sons were abused, or simply because, for a variety of reasons, these single mothers did not trust these men with their sons. A number of single mothers relied on other men to actualize the gender reaffirmation strategies in which married couples participated. While single mothers spoke of their fathers (i.e., their sons' grandfathers), cousins, the husbands of their friends, and other male role models, the men that single mothers most often depended on for gender reaffirmation were brothers and romantic partners. Sylvia (WSW) articulated this strategy of gender reaffirmation:

> I make sure that [my son] spends a lot of time with my brother so [my son] has that male contact that he needs, especially now that he's been [sexually abused]. Because of the abuse I feel that [my son] needs my brother . . . he needs that male figure to teach him how to be a man, to talk to girls, to be masculine, to be tough, even. I depend on my brother to show him the way. I also get my boyfriend to take [my son] out to play sports, go fishing, fix cars, do electrical work, or whatever else boys do. As a woman I can only do so much.

When single mothers could not depend on a brother or boyfriend "to show [their son] the way," reaffirmation proved to be more difficult, more time consuming, and, for some, more expensive. Bridgett (WSW), for instance, was not dating anyone at the time of the study, her parents and siblings lived in another state, and she was fairly new to the city.

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8. Prior to discovering that their sons had been (or were being) sexually abused, all the mothers in the sample were employed in the labor market. Twenty-seven of the thirty-six mothers were full-time employees and nine mothers worked part time. After their son's sexual abuse was brought to the forefront, six of the full-time employees switched to part-time work and two quit the paid labor force. Five of the nine part-time employees worked shorter hours and one quit altogether. Ten of the mothers remaining in the labor market full time were taking advantage of the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA). The FMLA allows for 12 weeks of *un*paid leave per year.

Consequently she did not have many men in her networks. Bridgett, an administrative assistant for a local college, was still determined to find "good male role models" for her son to be around. Rather than continuing to utilize her employee discount at the childcare program at the college, Bridgett enrolled her son in another program that was inconveniently located and cost significantly more. She explained, though, that the added cost and time was worth it:

> It's worth taking him to [the other childcare program] because the one run by [the college] is a little too froo-froo, if you know what I mean. You know how colleges try to be, like, way too liberal and they just let too many things fly by without questioning . . . I mean there is this one little boy who they let come in with barrettes in his hair, like he's a girl or something. My son definitely doesn't need to be around that; not after what he's been through. He needs positive examples of boys, and men, too. This new place wouldn't allow such nonsense . . . It's definitely worth the extra money because he needs good male role models.

Bridgett also registered her son for Boy Scouts and baseball, other expenses and time-consuming activities she did not have previously. She feels that this, too, will help reaffirm her son's gender and sexual identity in a "positive" manner:

> Boy Scouts and baseball will also get him involved with other positive role models. His father is nowhere to be found and there just aren't that many boys in our neighborhood for him to play with. They're either real young or older. So I think [Scouts and baseball] will, will help, you know what I mean? They will help him grow and learn how to be a boy again. And not like, you know, *that* kind of boy, a wimp or a, uhm, you know, a pussy-boy [she starts to laugh]. I can't believe I just said that, but you know what I'm trying to say—a faggot.

As Sylvia and Bridgett's representative accounts exemplify, single mothers are also invested in gendered heterosexual development. As women, mothers feel less capable of providing the tools for this development. Men, these women contend, are needed to correct any damage to their sons' gendered heterosexuality. Whereas married mothers tend to rely primarily on husbands, single mothers articulated a much wider network of men who participated in gender reaffirmation.

Racialized Interpretations of Male Child Sexual Abuse

Gender reaffirmation also triumphs across race in terms of children's gendered sexual development. Black and Puerto Rican parents, though, make use of an additional discursive resource that is not available to white parents. That is, a racial discourse that both engenders blacks and Latinos with "essential" heterosexual masculinity, and that provides a heuristic tool for conceptualizing ethno-racial subordination vis-à-vis white Americans.[9] All of the black and Puerto Rican families in this study deployed racial signifiers to articulate their experiences with CSA even though I did not initiate any racial discussions. Black and Puerto Rican parents utilize racial rhetoric as a supplementary justification for pushing their sons into the same stereotypical, hegemonic masculine activities as the white parents. For these parents, race is used as the conceptual glue that binds masculinity and heterosexuality (Collins 2004), reifies racial authenticity (Thomas 1997), and champions cultural superiority over the dominant group (see Espiritu 2001 and Wilkins 2004). The racialized accounts suggest that the sexually "moral" black and Latino imagery espoused by these parents is concomitant to the image of white sexual immorality. In sum, the participants of color use racial ideologies to mediate their interpretations of trauma through their self-defined customs and

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9. Research on trauma suggests that people's interpretations of stressful situations influence how they respond (Hess and Handel 1959; Janoff-Bulman 1992; McNally 2003). "Racial appraisals" expose how cultural expectations based on ethnoracial status and race-based structural inequality influence interpretations of trauma (McGuffey 2005b).

beliefs while the language of structure is deployed to suggest how others (namely whites) view them due to their position in a racial structure. Furthermore, gender reaffirmation by families of color reveals the intersections of sexuality and race in the construction of masculinities.

"It's a White Thing."

All of the black and Puerto Rican parents in this study repeatedly spoke of child sexual abuse as "something that happens to white folks." Maurice, a black father, was shocked when it came out that his son had been sexually abused for over two years. Maurice was equally stunned that his son's perpetrator was Maurice's own uncle. He explained:

> This [CSA] is something that happens in white families, not black. This is the kind of stuff you see in soap operas or those television channels like Lifetime or Oxygen that are supposed to be for women, but they're really just for white women. You don't see those kinds of stories on BET [Black Entertainment Television] . . . I just don't think we know how to talk about this in our communities. I mean, it's not how we define ourselves. It's not a part of our culture. That's the kind of sickness you heard your momma or grandmother talk about when they were maids in white people's houses. It's not supposed to be in our houses, too.

Elijah (BMM) endorses the same view. Not only does he assert that CSA is a "white thing," but he also suggests that if blacks are perpetrators of sexual abuse they have learned the behavior from their association with whites. For instance, a black in-law abused his son. Elijah explained the abuser's indecorous behavior as a result of leaving his African American community, attending a predominately white university, working with and residing in a white neighborhood, and marrying into a white family. He stated:

> [The perpetrator] must have learned that sexual abuse disorder from them [i.e., whites]. He was perfectly normal before he went off to [an elite university in the Northeast]. But you know we started noticing differences early on. You know, he started acting white . . . I know he picked up that perversion from hanging out with them all the time. He lives and breathes with and for white people . . . and he married a white woman, and is with her family more than ours . . . That's made him very successful but I'm not surprised he picked up their bad traits, too.

All of the black and Puerto Rican parents spoke of CSA as "a white thing." Even though self-report data suggest that CSA is equally distributed among racial and class categories, other research also suggests that parents of color perceive child sexual abuse in general, and male CSA in particular, as something that happens to whites because people of color often view sexual deviancy as a part of white culture (Abney and Priest 1995; Priest 1992; Wilkins 2004; Wyatt 1985).

Identified as a white sexual perversion, black and Puerto Rican parents interpreted CSA as especially damaging to their sons. Not only were their sons' gendered sexual identities now in danger, but their racial statuses were also threatened. Marianna (PMW) verbalized how the sexual transgression of CSA challenges not only sexual development, but gender and race as well:

> Sexually abusing children in our communities is just unheard of, especially boys . . . It is so devastating to boys because these boys' manhood is now all messed up. As a Puerto Rican boy his Puerto Ricanness is at risk because boy sex abuse doesn't happen to us. Well, it's not supposed to happen to us. It's a white thing. It's one of the things that separates us from them [whites]. I feel like we have to work a little bit harder than the other parents [i.e., white parents] because of this.

The blacks and Puerto Ricans felt that they had extra work to do as compared to white parents. This working harder included taking extra time to increase the racial proximity and cultural interactions of their sons. Like other participants of color, Marianna and her husband try to help their son develop and maintain same-race friends and attend cultural events that aid in ethno-racial cultural maintenance (which will be explained more below).

"He Might as Well Be Dead."

The black and Puerto Rican parents uniformly discussed their child's sexual abuse in conjunction with their sons' racially marginalized position in the social order. If the sexual abuse resulted in a homosexual orientation, the parents feared that this would further stigmatize their child and themselves as parents. Unlike studies of white children where parents perceive that it is more challenging to raise girls, black and Puerto Rican parents often perceive that it is more difficult to raise boys (Hill 1999). This is largely due to media depictions and stereotypes of black and Puerto Rican men as criminals. It is feared that these portrayals will increase the likelihood of misfortune for black and Puerto Rican boys. The black and Puerto Rican parents in this study also articulated this perception. As Carlos (PMM) expressed:

> Raising our boys is so much more difficult than raising our girls. Not that girls don't have it hard, but our boys are more likely to face the criminal justice system and be seen as hoodlums at school. Being a Puerto Rican boy is not easier, but they face more life threatening [challenges] from white society than Puerto Rican girls. So being Puerto Rican, a boy, and gay would be too hard.

Brian (BMM) went further and connected child sexual trauma, race, and the added stress of possible homosexuality on the structural position of his son:

> My son is already black. Ain't that enough? If this thing [CSA] makes him into some gay, I've got double the things I've got to worry about for him. We already worry about our children's racial safety. We don't have time like whites to think about and worry about them being gay.

Berna (BMW) agreed:

> We [i.e., blacks] are already affected by racism every day. Whether you are talking about racial gaps in income, home ownership, and racism on the job, and so on, we parents have enough to worry about every time our child walks out the door. We are just at the bottom of the racial hierarchy. So now you tell us that our son could be gay? That's just too much to think about. It makes his future seem darker, bleaker . . . He's already placed below everybody because of his race. As a good parent I am obliged to make sure he has the best chance possible. I can't do much about him being black, but I can do my best to make sure that he's not gay on top of it all.

As Josephine, a black single mother, summarized: "If [CSA] turns my boy funny I don't know what I'm going to do. If he's black, male, and gay he might as well be dead! He will always be at the bottom of the ladder and there's no way he'll be able to climb up."

These racialized appraisals of trauma are directly related to gender reaffirmation. After discussing CSA as something that "is simply not a part of black culture" and how "being black already discredits our son's humanity as compared to whites in society's eyes," Darrel (BMM), whose son was molested by a white perpetrator, made this clear:

> We live in a white neighborhood and our son goes to a white school so he doesn't get the type of male socialization that he needs to tolerate this sexual abuse . . . We've signed him up for a basketball team that's across town where there's a lot more blacks and we take him to visit my and [my wife's] families a lot. They live in black parts of town. He needs other black boys to help straighten him out, so [my wife] and I make sure he hangs around other black boys as much as possible.

Kenneth (BMM), whose son was also molested by a white man, echoes Darrel's sentiments. He and his wife also live in a primarily white community. He believes that his son:

> needs to be around us [blacks] so that this thing [CSA] won't stop him from growing up into the man he needs to be. Hanging around other black kids, other black boys in particular, will show him that he can mature naturally without the stain of homosexuality on him.

Although there are approximately eight black households within a four-block radius of his home, these families do not have any boys near his son's age; they are either toddlers or in college. As such, Kenneth takes his son to visit relatives on weekends so that his son can play with his cousins and the other black children who live near them. When I asked Kenneth

why his son could not play with the white boys in his own neighborhood, he said, "They can't teach a black boy how to be a man."

Monica and Brian, a black married couple, were the most extreme. Whereas other black and Puerto Rican participants spent a vast amount of time, energy, and money to coordinate their children's lives to increase their son's same-race interactions while living in predominately white neighborhoods, they moved altogether, to a racially and economically mixed neighborhood that is in the process of gentrification. This neighborhood is also adjacent to the working class black community in which Monica was raised. They said they originally moved because they did not want others in the neighborhood to know about the abuse. They admit, however, that their relatives encouraged them to move near them so that they could help them more easily. According to Monica and Brian, an added bonus is that their son gets to play with other black children. Also, their relatives tell them that this move could possibly protect their sexually abused son and their other three children from future abuse because "it [CSA] is rampant among whites." The fact that a white adolescent abused their son seemed to solidify this impression.

By actively increasing the proximity and time of their sons' same-race interactions in hopes of "saving" their sons' masculinities, these parents' usage of racial ideologies attempts to reestablish a racially specific type of gendered sexuality in their sons. These accounts also highlight variations in masculinities. As the black and Puerto Rican parents attempt to reaffirm their sons' gender and sexual identities, they do so in racialized ways.

In addition, it is important to note that although the parents are using the language of race in their accounts, they are also in practice encouraging a *race* and *class* form of gendered sexuality. Research suggests that when people talk about African Americans and Puerto Ricans they are often envisioning those who are working class or poor, especially in regards to gender and sexuality (Collins 2004; Roberts 1997; Wilkins 2004). Similarly, when these families talk about the racial proximity they feel is needed to save their sons' masculinities, their talk is encoded with class implications. These aren't black and Puerto Rican middle class populations that they are using to protect their sons but, rather, black and Puerto Rican poor and working class communities. One reason for this may be that these families are first-generation middle class and are, therefore, more familiar with black and Puerto Rican poor/working class communities as opposed to black/Puerto Rican middle class neighborhoods. From this perspective, it is not because these parents are necessarily consciously thinking about a poor or working-classed form of racial and gendered sexuality. Rather, what the parents know to be racially authentic is class coded because of the way social class has shaped the particular networks in which the black and Puerto Rican parents are embedded.

This research contributes to the literature that suggests that variations in racialized masculinities are not simply cultural artifacts. Instead, the social location of racial minorities in a racially stratified society intersects with culture and both simultaneously influence the performance of masculinities (Baca Zinn 1980, 2001; Chen 1999). However, insofar as the families of color invoke the special problems of blackness or Puerto Ricanness as justification for gender reaffirmation, they are primarily seizing on a discursive strategy for explaining a set of actions in which the white families also partake. Moreover, because they perceive differences between racial groups, the black and Puerto Rican parents' practice of gender reaffirmation is different in kind (e.g., taking their children out of white middle class neighborhoods and transporting them to distant black and Puerto Rican communities) more so than in quantity from the white families' version.

Conclusion and Discussion

The participants' high levels of education and income and the study's geographic location in the Northeast are typically associated with gender and sexual liberalism (Deutsch 1999). The fact that these parents chose a therapeutic program that is self-consciously feminist

would predict a more progressive interpretation of CSA. However, I show this is not the case. Despite the progressive intentions of the Children's Center, sexual trauma galvanizes social anxieties around apposite gender, sexual, and, for some, racial enactments that are used to narrowly interpret the traumatic event as a threat to heteronormative gender relations. Extrafamilial child sexual abuse is a particularly clear, yet unfortunate, heuristic for understanding this process. The social construction of boys and men is most evident when there is a threat to the privileges of hegemonic masculinity (Chen 1999; Messner 2001). Gender reaffirmation rests on the assumption that gender can be "saved" if it is threatened. This article extends this theoretical concept from how social actors attempt to reaffirm traditional ideals of gender for themselves to how they endeavor to reaffirm gender for others after trauma. Parents relied on athleticism, emotional detachment, and the promotion of heterosexuality to aid in reaffirmation. These tenets have consistently been associated with hegemonic masculinity. Focusing on these structural identifiers of hegemonic masculinity allowed these men and women to feel secure in their parenting. For the black and Puerto Rican parents, racial marginalization influenced their appraisals of trauma and their process of reaffirmation. According to these parents, this necessitates a racially specific form of gender reaffirmation. More research is necessary to see if these findings also emerge in cases of incest.

Research consistently shows that when the CSA victim is a boy, parents often believe that same-sex CSA can lead to homosexuality. Viewing sexuality, gender, and, for black and Puerto Rican parents, race, as inextricably linked, many mothers and fathers in this study felt they had to vigorously reconstruct sexualized and racialized identities for their sexually abused sons through gender reaffirmation. As Amy Wilkins (2004) makes clear, active destabilization of one identity category necessarily puts others at stake. Although the parents explicitly acknowledge sexuality as their target of concern, they attempt to manipulate other forms of social differentiation (e.g., gender and race) to hopefully achieve the heterosexual outcome they desire. This underscores both the significance of sexuality and race in the production of gender reaffirmation and the importance of sexuality in the social construction of gender and race.

By participating in gender reaffirmation processes, most parents perpetuate hegemonic gender relations. In this way, gender reaffirmation reproduces the very structures that constrain men and women. By "making sense" of situations in terms of conventional notions of order that are rooted in inequality, gender reaffirming parents in this study create and recreate a world that is indeed ordered around unequal power relations. "Critical situations" reveal that rather than individuals acting passively to the deterministic confines of social structure, social systems supply actors with the tools they need to produce and reproduce resultant structures. The agentic quality of this duality of structure and agency, however, leaves room for innovation and change despite the persistence of normative social relations, as evidenced by the few progressive parents in the study.

Beyond this summary, however, I also want to suggest that the more individualistic theories about sexually abused boys' "hypermasculinization" after abuse need to be questioned and empirically examined to assess the possible social causes for victims' behaviors. In the CSA literature, hypermasculinzation is a psychological concept that stresses internal, psychosomatic impulses that drive individual boys and men into exaggerated, stereotypical male activities after same-sex CSA (Dhaliwal et al. 1996; Green 1993; Rogers and Terry 1984; Watkins and Bentovim 1992; Wellman 1993). My findings are consistent with psychological studies that routinely observe hypermasculinization in male CSA victims. The hypermasculine behaviors reported in these psychological studies include disruptive behaviors, emotional detachment, violence, and homophobic behaviors. Recognizing the stigma associated with same-sex acts, this literature suggests that sexually abused boys attempt to disassociate themselves from anything that symbolizes femininity or homosexuality. In doing so, these boys internalize hypermasculine representations and act out these images in their lives. This explanatory model goes on to say that this cognitively protects the child from further self-ridicule.

My research suggests that these outcomes may not be solely an individual process. Social factors may be as, or even more, significant than internal psychic processes. My findings suggest that sexually abused boys do not turn to hypermasculinity on their own, the result of a more or less natural psychological response to a perceived threat to their gender and sexual identities. Instead, it is the parents in this study who push and encourage their sons' participation into *hegemonic* norms of masculinity out of their desire for heterosexual boys. My findings highlight the *social* process of conferring hegemonic masculinity onto boys rather than the more individualistic interpretation of hypermasculinization as articulated in most of the CSA literature. The parents' fear of homosexuality and the strategies they partake in to reaffirm gender reflect these social influences. Hegemonic masculinity values many of the "disruptive behaviors" associated with boys' responses to CSA. Sports, the objectification of girls and women, emotional detachment, and homophobia are common features in the lives of most boys regardless of their sexual abuse status.

It is likely that the social organization of sexuality, masculinity, and race exacerbates preexisting social patterns of boys' externalization and hypermasculinity rather than CSA causing these behaviors. Although there were pockets of resistance, the cumulative findings suggest that the majority of fathers and mothers alike adhere to hegemonic forms of masculinity in order to cope. That gender reaffirmation appears across household composition, across gender, across race, and in a study with participant demographics typically associated with gender liberalism suggests the power of gender reaffirmation as a theoretical concept. Future research should develop controls to test these ideas experimentally.

Last, my findings support other trauma research that suggests conservatism is a common consequence of tragedy. Trauma theorists generally root this cognitive conservatism in the need for psychological stability and coherence after tragic events (Janoff-Bulman 1992). My research highlights the social dimensions of conservatism and illuminates how individuals draw upon macro understandings of the social world to contour social psychological interpretations. If we take the research seriously that people's interpretations have behavioral consequences and that social forces shape how victims respond to trauma, it is crucial to chart the social landscape that shapes the perceptions of those close to the victim. My research demonstrates how people can use the social organization of sexuality, gender, and race to render situations intelligible so that they can act in a way that they perceive as reasonable. Relying solely, or even primarily, on intrapsychic frameworks for understanding victim reactions may not do justice to the complexity of trauma and may hinder recovery if therapeutic strategies fail to see how the social environment contours interpretations and behavior. The value of studying trauma in this way is that it sets the stage for analyses of critical situations under a variety of trauma conditions, leading to more critical social psychological understandings of the situational factors and experiences of trauma.

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