PUBLIC EDUCATION PROGRAMS FOR AFRICAN-AMERICAN MALES: A GENDER EQUITY PERSPECTIVE

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INTRODUCTION

Today, African-Americans are experiencing a crisis of poverty and discrimination. Unemployment, homelessness, patterns of de facto segregation in housing, crime, and death due to homicide disproportionately affect this group. Furthermore, "a decline in manufacturing and low-skilled jobs, a drop in real mean wages for young black men, and the continued undereducation of blacks combine to deny many black males the realistic opportunity to help support a family on their incomes."[1] Falling most heavily on urban centers, these conditions threaten the survival of the entire African-American family—men, women, and children.

The crisis presents devastating barriers to African-American children who hope to succeed in urban schools.[2] Increasingly, students in these schools hail from families headed by single women. More and more frequently, they live in poverty, they are racial minorities, and they are raised in non-English-speaking homes. The nations' schools compound the disadvantages of these children. De facto racial segregation results in African-Americans' physical separation from whites and provides unequal access to courses, equipment, facilities, teachers, and instruction.[3] In many urban schools, "the concentration of black and other minority students denies selected children the opportunity to participate in educational systems that prepare people to fill the complete range of positions in an increasingly complex labor market."[4]

Second in importance perhaps only to the family as an institution that develops the next generation, schools provide a key environment for addressing critical social issues. Many commentators focus on public schools as a solution to the current social and economic crisis facing African-American males.[5] In particular, numerous groups have recently proposed the establishment of public schools and programs exclusively for African-

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1. QUALITY EDUCATION FOR MINORITIES PROJECT, MASSACHUSETTS INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY, EDUCATION THAT WORKS: AN ACTION PLAN FOR THE EDUCATION OF MINORITIES 30 (1990). *See generally* WILLIAM J. WILSON, THE TRULY DISADVANTAGED: THE INNER CITY, THE UNDERCLASS, AND PUBLIC POLICY (1987) (analyzing inner-city problems and arguing that the amelioration of conditions of the truly disadvantaged requires public policies that are not race-specific).

2. *See* Miriam P. Gladden, *The Constitutionality of African-American Male Schools and Programs*, 24 COLUM. HUM. RTS. L. REV. 239, 268-69 (1992-93) (discussing the relationships among racism, economic discrimination, and education).

3. THE NETWORK OF REGIONAL DESEGREGATION ASSISTANCE CENTERS, RESEGREGATION OF PUBLIC SCHOOLS: THE THIRD GENERATION, A REPORT ON THE CONDITION OF DESEGREGATION IN AMERICA'S PUBLIC SCHOOLS (1989); *see also* Michael J. Weber, *Immersed in an Education Crisis: Alternative Programs for African-American Males*, 45 STAN. L. REV. 1099, 1101 (1993) (arguing that even in otherwise integrated public schools, the tracking system segregates African-Americans within most inner-city schools).

4. COMPACT FOR EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITY, MILWAUKEE'S CITY-SUBURBAN INTERDISTRICT INTEGRATION PROGRAM: A REVIEW OF THE STUDENT APPLICATION & ASSIGNMENT PROCESS 7 (1990). Hispanic students face many of these same barriers.

5. The effective schools model pioneered by Ronald Edmonds is one example of a model that focuses on urban centers. *See* Percy Bates, *Desegregation: Can We Get There*

American male students.[6] Such single-sex public school programs raise a number of questions for those concerned with gender equity in education:

- What is the nature of these proposals, and who is involved in developing them?
- How do the proposals define the crisis for African-American males? Are the roots of that crisis different for African-American females, or for male and female students of other races or nationalities? What justifies race- and gender-specific approaches to addressing student needs?
- What light does educational research shed on the needs of African-American male students and African-American female students? What does it say about the impact of sex segregation on African-American students?
- What assumptions, explicit or implicit, do the proposals make about the roles and impact of females as teachers and students?
- How do the proposals plan to treat societal attitudes of male supremacy in an all-male environment? How will the curricula of these schools and programs address the role and impact of women in society?
- How will pilot programs be evaluated? What are the implications of failure? Of success? If found to be successful, can these pilot programs be replicated for wider implementation?
- What are the implications of these proposals, in light of efforts to promote educational equity for women and girls since the enactment of Title IX[7] in 1972?
- How should educational equity advocates respond to these proposals?

From Here?, PHI DELTA KAPPAN, Sept. 1990, at 8, 16. Many have also supported the successful model for school restructuring and community involvement developed by Dr. James Comer at the Yale Child Study Center in New Haven, Connecticut. *See* Michel Marriott, *A New Road to Learning: Teaching the Whole Child*, N.Y. TIMES, June 13, 1990, at A1, B7; Diana Shipley, *"What Is a Community?" A Principal's View of James Comer's School Development Program*, 8 EQUITY AND CHOICE 19, 19-23 (1992).

6. *See, e.g.*, Carol Chmelynski, *Controversy Attends Schools with All-Black, All-Male Classes*, THE EXECUTIVE EDUCATOR (Oct. 1990), at 16; Lisa K. Hsiao, *"Separate But Equal" Revisited: The Detroit Male Academies Case*, 1992/1993 ANN. SURV. AM. L. 85, 86-87; Weber, *supra* note 3, at 1099-1110; Pamela J. Smith, *All-Male Black Schools and the Equal Protection Clause: A Step Forward Toward Education*, 66 TUL. L. REV. 2003, 2004-05 (1992); Sharon K. Mollman, *The Gender Gap: Separating the Sexes in Public Education*, 68 IND. L.J. 149, 150 (1992); Note, *Inner-City Single-Sex Schools: Educational Reform or Invidious Discrimination?*, 105 HARV. L. REV. 1741, 1741 (1992); Gladden, *supra* note 2, at 242; Thomas E. Midgette & Eddie Glenn, *African-American Male Academies: A Positive View*, 21 J. MULTICULTURAL COUNSELING & DEV. 69, 69 (1993).

7. 20 U.S.C. § 1681 (1972), *amended by* 20 U.S.C. § 1681 (1988 & Supp. IV 1992). Title IX of the Educational Amendments of 1972 provides that "No person . . . shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving federal financial assistance. . . ." *Id.* The regulations implementing Title IX appear at 34 C.F.R. § 106 (1993).

This article explores these questions from a women's educational equity perspective: that is, with an eye toward the goal of promoting gender equity in education. The crisis in this country's public education system has a devastating impact on both male and female students of color. Solutions that separate the sexes may exacerbate sexist attitudes, particularly among boys, and promote sex-based inequality. Targeting one group of victims of discrimination in isolation from the needs of others evades the responsibility of school systems to treat all students without bias. Instead of pitting boys against girls in the race for allocating scarce educational dollars, educators should focus on the following: building on, rather than eroding, the equity achieved in law and social policy during the past thirty years; promoting the implementation of strategies that expand awareness of the forms and impact of sexism, as well as racism, in education; and strengthening the coalition supporting equity in the United States' public education.

Part I of this article summarizes recent proposals for addressing the crisis experienced by African-American male students. It provides a brief overview of the research on single-sex elementary and secondary education. Part II defines the educational and social crisis facing African-American girls and examines the educational and social context for the proposals for African-American male academies. It argues that such academies undermine law and public policy. Part III of the article outlines an agenda for changing the United States' public education system to promote gender fairness. It includes strategies for responding to proposals to establish all-male public schools and specific suggestions for action.

I

EDUCATIONAL PROPOSALS ADDRESSING THE CRISIS OF
AFRICAN-AMERICAN MALES

Reports on the status of African-American male students in public school systems have been the subject of intense discussion in recent years.[8] Large school systems, such as Milwaukee, New Orleans, and Prince George's County, Maryland, have developed several of these reports. Other city school districts, including New York, San Diego, Washington, D.C., Detroit, and Baltimore, have formulated or implemented programs that address the social and economic crises facing African-American males.

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8. *See, e.g.*, AFRICAN AMERICAN MALE TASK FORCE, MILWAUKEE PUBLIC SCHOOLS, EDUCATING AFRICAN AMERICAN MALES: A DREAM DEFERRED 1 (1990); WARREN SIMMONS & MICHAEL GRADY, BLACK MALE ACHIEVEMENT: FROM PERIL TO PROMISE, REPORT OF THE SUPERINTENDENT'S ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON BLACK MALE ACHIEVEMENT i-iii (1990); Joseph Berger, *New York Board Backs School for Minority Men*, N.Y. TIMES, Jan. 10, 1991, at A1; LynNell Hancock, *Ujamaa Means Controversy*, VILLAGE VOICE, Nov. 6, 1990, at 11; Nelson George, *Afro Ed*, VILLAGE VOICE, Jan. 22, 1991, at 24.

The school districts of Prince George's County and Milwaukee have published reports that identify the following factors as indicators of African-American male students' unequal treatment and lack of access to quality education:

- low teacher expectations;[9]
- low scores on standardized tests;[10]
- disproportionately high referrals of African-American boys to special education classes for the educable mentally retarded;[11]
- high levels of school drop-out;[12]
- suspension and expulsion;[13]
- absence of African-American adult males as school administrators and classroom teachers, particularly at the early grade levels.[14]

Proposed solutions to these problems include system-wide education restructuring, the use of African-American male advocates, and the establishment of single-sex schools.

A. The Range of Proposals

1. System-Wide Education Restructuring

The Task Force report of Prince George's County, Maryland proposes a comprehensive response to the crisis in the United States' public education system as it affects certain African-American males. The report acknowledges the school system's continuing problems in achieving equity in the treatment of African-American male students. Rather than targeting reform only at this group, however, the task force suggests restructuring

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9. *See* Rodney J. Reed, *Education and Achievement of Young Black Males, in* YOUNG, BLACK, AND MALE IN AMERICA 77, 80-82 (Jewelle Taylor Gibbs ed., 1988).

10. DETROIT PUBLIC SCHOOLS, MALE ACADEMY GRADES K-8: A DEMONSTRATION PROGRAM FOR AT-RISK MALES 3 (Dec. 7, 1990) (draft) [hereinafter DETROIT PUBLIC SCHOOLS]. *See also* OFFICE OF DEPUTY SUPERINTENDANT, SAN DIEGO CITY SCHOOLS, IMPROVING THE ACHIEVEMENT OF AFRICAN AMERICAN MALE STUDENTS 1 (1989) [hereinafter IMPROVING THE ACHIEVEMENT OF AFRICAN AMERICAN MALE STUDENTS] ("Black male students hold the lowest position . . . whether considering standardized test scores, grade point average, [or] suspensions . . . [in the school district.]").

11. Smith, *supra* note 6, at 2042 ("Nationwide, thirty-six percent of all special education students are African-American males."); Gladden, *supra* note 2, at 257 ("[A] Black student is three times more likely to be placed in an educable mentally retarded class and is 30 percent more likely to be placed in a class for the trainable mentally retarded than a white student.").

12. *See* Elaine Ray, *All-Male Black Schools Put on Hold in Detroit: Girls will be Admitted after Court Challenge,* BOSTON GLOBE, Sept. 1, 1991, at A16 (describing the drop-out rate of the urban school district of Detroit, where 90 percent of the students are African-American: 54 percent of boys and 45 percent of girls drop out of school before graduating).

13. Smith, *supra* note 6, at 2042 (stating that 37 percent of all suspended students are African-American males).

14. *See* Carol Ascher, *School Programs for African-American Male Students,* 8 EQUITY AND CHOICE 27 (1991).

schools to achieve equity for all students. It recommends increasing funds to match those of magnet schools for gifted students; promoting multicultural education; hiring more African-American teachers, counselors, and administrators, with a particular focus on increasing the presence of African-American males in the classroom; and working with other agencies to implement a multiservice approach to schools serving disadvantaged communities.[15]

2. *African-American Male Advocates*

A second, less dramatic strategy for addressing the crisis facing African-American males is to promote appropriate role models in schools. In addition to requiring its schools to assess the condition of its African-American male students, the San Diego school system proposed the assignment of an African-American male advocate to four pilot schools—two elementary schools, one junior high and one high school. The advocate would work closely with a core group of African-American male students, the students' teachers, and their parents to ensure the students' success as they moved through the system.[16]

3. *Single-Sex Schools*

A third, more controversial approach is to separate male students to focus on the special needs of African-American boys. The Milwaukee and Detroit school systems have both adopted this approach.[17]

The Milwaukee Task Force recommended curricular policy changes within the all-male schools, such as studying African-American culture, flexibly structuring the time allotted to reading and other academic areas, and offering "gender socialization courses." These courses, required for all students, would be designed to help discuss gender in a supportive, single-sex setting.

The proposal of the Detroit Public Schools (DPS) to establish the Male Academy, Grades K-8, aimed at "increasing the likelihood that urban males will grow up 'whole' and prepared to meet the challenges of life and living."[18] Essential features of the proposed Male Academy were "an Afrocentric curriculum, a Rites of Passage program, mentors, tutors, extended school activities and a network of supports to encourage students to achieve and set goals for the future."[19] DPS presented the Male Academy

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15. JOHN A. MURPHY, PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS, REPORT OF THE SUPERINTENDENT'S ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON BLACK MALE ACHIEVEMENT, BLACK MALE ACHIEVEMENT: FROM PROMISE TO PERIL ix, Part I, 24 (1990).

16. IMPROVING THE ACHIEVEMENT OF AFRICAN AMERICAN MALE STUDENTS, *supra* note 10, at 3.

17. Both of these school systems have since abandoned all-male schools. *See infra* text accompanying notes 72-74.

18. DETROIT PUBLIC SCHOOLS, *supra* note 10, at 60.

19. *Id.*

proposal as one of Detroit's "schools of choice" options.[20] The proposal included plans for 75 to 100 hours of staff workshops, training classes, and planning sessions that would focus on the "developmental needs of male students."[21]

The DPS proposed to evaluate the success of its Male Academy by documenting activities, attitudes, and perceptions of the staff and analyzing data on the academic achievement of targeted males. Factors such as standardized test scores, grade point average, daily attendance, violations of the student code of conduct, subject failures, and promotion rates would measure success. The school district's policy was to deprive a school of its "Alternative School of Choice" classification and subject it to district intervention if it did not attain a "satisfactory" or "excellent" grade and adequate building utilization within three years of the program's inception.[22]

B.   Research on Single-Sex and Single-Race Schooling

Proposals for single-sex African-American schools tend to focus on the alarming evidence of crisis, rather than the data that evaluates the success of this solution. However, while some of the sparse data on the subject[23] suggest that single-sex public schools are successful for some African-American children, it also indicates that children gain significant benefits from co-ed schooling.   ·

International studies conducted in the 1960s across a variety of cultures, including several within the United States, reveal that students in single-sex schools consistently outperform students in co-ed schools in mathematics, science, and reading ability.[24] Two studies by Cornelius Riordan found that African-American students of both sexes perform better in single-sex schools on all tests, scoring almost a year above their counterparts in co-ed schools on science tests.[25] Other evidence, however, complicates these findings. Research on private schools in England shows that girls do better in single-sex schools, while boys excel in co-ed schools on measures of career aspirations, ideas about themselves, and the world of work.[26] Clearly, this issue warrants further research.

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20. This program establishes magnet schools, which do not limit enrollment to neighborhood boundaries. Entry criteria may include high grades, musical talent, or interest in math or science. There are often long waiting lists for the most popular of these schools.

21. DETROIT PUBLIC SCHOOLS, *supra* note 10, at 35.

22. *Id.* at 7, 8.

23. *See generally* OFFICE OF RESEARCH, U.S. DEP'T OF EDUCATION, SINGLE-SEX SCHOOLING: PERSPECTIVES FROM PRACTICE AND RESEARCH 1 (1993); Patricia A. Bauch, *Differences Among Single-Sex and Coeducational High Schools*, MOMENTUM, Apr. 1988, at 56.

24. Academic performance differences between school types are greater for secondary than for elementary students. Bauch, *supra* note 23, at 56.

25. CORNELIUS RIORDAN, GIRLS AND BOYS IN SCHOOL: TOGETHER OR SEPARATE? 111 Tbl. 5.7 (1990).

26. PETER MORTIMORE, EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IN THE CURRICULUM IN SINGLE SEX SCHOOLS, INNER LONDON EDUCATION AUTHORITY, RESEARCH AND STATISTICS REPORTS

Concerning cross-sex interaction, researchers have found that African-American students interact more freely across gender lines than white students. One study notes the inevitable increase in cross-sex attraction over time, concluding that young men and women lose an important social lesson if they come to know each other as love interests without first having discovered each other as peers.[27]

II
WOMEN'S EDUCATIONAL EQUITY CONCERNS

A.   *The Nature of the Crisis Facing African-American Girls*

As advocates for women's educational equity, we are concerned about the potential impact that single-sex schools for African-American males will have on female students and teachers. Considerable data demonstrates that young women are not insulated from the crisis that affects African-American males.[28] High school drop-out rates impede occupational opportunities for all African-American youth. Although the overall male drop-out rate nationally (13.5 percent) is slightly higher than the female drop-out rate (12 percent), the unemployment rate for female drop-outs is higher than for males.[29] In addition, many girls leave school for the same reasons boys do[30]—they feel unsuccessful and do not achieve in the school environment. Girls also have unique reasons to leave school: they drop out to help support their families, both economically and emotionally. One expert noted, in fact, that a strong indicator of a young woman's likelihood to drop out of high school is the number of siblings she has.[31] Women also leave school as a result of early pregnancy.[32] Few women who drop out of school return to complete their education.[33]

Furthermore, African-American women share some of the same societal problems as African-American men. The difference in homicide rates between the races is widest between African-American men and white

(1985); *see also* Mollman, *supra* note 6, at 166-67 (noting that the presence of girls in the classroom enhances male achievement).

27. Andrew H. Sager, Janet W. Schofield & Howard N. Snyder, *Race and Gender Barriers: Preadolescent Peer Behavior in Academic Classrooms*, 54 CHILD DEV. 1032, 1039 (1983).

28. *See* Hsiao, *supra* note 6, at 110 (noting that recent crime statistics indicate that female involvement in gangs and other criminal activity has increased dramatically over the past decade).

29. *See* Smith, *supra* note 6, at 2042-43.

30. MICHELLE FINE, FRAMING DROPOUTS 20 n.7 (1991) (noting that males are more likely to drop out because they "did not like school," received poor grades, or experienced behavioral problems).

31. *Id.* at n.9. *See generally* JANICE EARLE, FEMALE DROPOUTS, NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF STATE BOARDS OF EDUCATION (1989).

32. *See, e.g.*, Smith, *supra* note 6, at 2034 ("[O]f the 10.6 percent of African-American females who drop out of high school, forty percent drop out because of pregnancy.").

33. FINE, *supra* note 30, at 23 n.11. *See also* NATIONAL COMMISSION ON WORKING WOMEN OF WIDER OPPORTUNITIES FOR WOMEN, WOMEN AND WORK FACTSHEET (1990).

men: young African-American men are seven to eight times more likely than white males to be homicide victims. African-American female youth, however, are also more likely to be killed than their white counterparts: young African-American women are four to five times more likely to be victims than young white women.[34] Meanwhile, sex differences in the use of alcohol among African-Americans are diminishing. The greatest increases in the volume of drinking is occurring among women from fifteen to twenty-nine, and among divorced or separated African-American women.[35]

Despite this evidence, no major school system to our knowledge has made a comprehensive effort to address the needs of African-American girls. Although the view persists that schools for pregnant and parenting students represent such an effort, schools for pregnant students are in fact modeled on educational programs for temporarily disabled students,[36] and schools for parenting students were created to benefit students who have primary responsibility for raising their children. The perpetuated notion that these schools are intended only for girls illustrates the tenacity of sex-role stereotyping in this society. School systems must work to change this view instead of reinforcing the sexism it represents.

B.   Differences between Male and Female Educational Experiences

1.   Classroom Experiences and Socialization

Reports on the needs of African-American males raise questions about whether different solutions are appropriate for boys and girls. For example, some educators claim that the current educational system is more effective for African-American females. As evidence, they cite women's longer life expectancy, lower rates of imprisonment, and higher rates of college entry compared to African-American males.[37]

Research on the educational experiences and needs of African-American females, however, suggests that African-American females have unique needs that remain unaddressed. African-American girls enter

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34. NATIONAL BLACK CHILD DEVELOPMENT INSTITUTE, THE STATUS OF AFRICAN AMERICAN CHILDREN: TWENTIETH ANNIVERSARY REPORT, 1970-1990 108 (1990).

35. Ashaki H. Taha-Cissé, *Issues for African American Women, in* ALCOHOL AND DRUGS ARE WOMEN'S ISSUES, VOLUME ONE: A REVIEW OF THE ISSUES 54-55 (Paula Roth ed., 1991).

36. WOMEN'S RIGHTS PROJECT OF THE AMERICAN CIVIL LIBERTIES UNION AND THE AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF UNIVERSITY WOMEN, EQUAL EDUCATION OPPORTUNITIES FOR PREGNANT AND PARENTING STUDENTS: MESHING THE RIGHTS WITH THE REALITIES 8 (1990). Women's equity advocates have fought to establish pregnancy in legal, if not social, terms as a temporary disability. This classification would avoid the use of gender as a basis for denying women access to rights and privileges to which they would otherwise be entitled. *See* the Pregnancy Discrimination Act. 42 U.S.C. § 2000e-2(k) (1994); California Federal Savings & Loan Ass'n v. Guerra, 479 U.S. 272, 290 (1987) ("Congress [intended the Pregnancy Discrimination Act to be] a 'floor beneath which pregnancy disability benefits may not drop. . . .' ").

37. DETROIT PUBLIC SCHOOLS, *supra* note 10, at 17.

school with at least two differences from other girls and African-American boys: a heightened sensitivity about their bodies and an awareness of their expected participation in domestic and household work.[38] African-American girls also have fewer opportunities to gain work experience while they are still in school, and they have fewer role models than African-American boys.[39] Yet, since African-American girls have not even been "awarded the negative and pejorative stereotypes that correspond to their black brothers,"[40] few scholars have studied the impact and formation of the triple oppression of sexism, racism, and classism upon the educational experiences of African-American girls.

African-American girls exhibit unique behavior which also merits special attention. While boys in our society tend to "act out" their rebellion through disruptive and unruly behavior, the stereotype behavior for girls is to "act in" by withdrawing from confrontation and interaction.[41] African-American girls, however, fight back, verbally or physically, against more than half the aggression they encounter—a retaliation rate that clearly exceeds the rate for white girls, but remains below that for boys of either race.[42]

Finally, teachers tend to underestimate the abilities of African-American female students. Although they identify African-American girls as mature, self-sufficient, and helpful,[43] teachers subtlely encourage African-American girls to pursue social contacts, rather than press towards high academic achievement.[44] They give less attention to African-American girls' work and are more likely to praise them for behavior than for content-related performance.[45]

These factors have had a negative impact on African-American girls.[46] African-American female fourth-graders in racially desegregated classrooms have lower self-esteem concerning their own academic skills than

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38. SARA LAWRENCE LIGHTFOOT, SOCIALIZATION AND EDUCATION OF YOUNG BLACK GIRLS IN SCHOOLS 17-18 (1977).

39. JEWELLE T. GIBBS, CITY GIRLS: PSYCHOSOCIAL ADJUSTMENT OF URBAN BLACK ADOLESCENT FEMALES 28-36 (1985).

40. SARA LAWRENCE LIGHTFOOT, NATIONAL ADVISORY COUNCIL ON WOMEN'S EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS AND TEXAS SOUTHERN UNIVERSITY, BLACK WOMEN'S SYMPOSIUM, YOUNG BLACK GIRLS: THE SEPARATE WORLDS OF FAMILIES AND SCHOOLS 106-07 (1980).

41. Eric Ostrov, Daniel Offer & Kenneth I. Howard, *Gender Differences in Adolescent Symptomatology: A Normative Study*, 28 J. AM. ACAD. OF CHILD ADOLESCENT PSYCHIATRY 394-98 (1989).

42. *Id.*

43. Linda Grant, *Black Females' "Place" in Desegrated Classrooms*, SOC. EDUC. 102 (1984).

44. *Id.* at 103.

45. MYRA SADKER & DAVID SADKER, FAILING AT FAIRNESS: HOW AMERICA'S SCHOOLS CHEAT GIRLS 64-65 (1994).

46. Grant, *supra* note 43, at 109; *see also* Note, *supra* note 6, at 1745 n.32 (noting that nearly half of all female students in Detroit drop out of school, and, on average, twelfth-grade girls score only at a ninth grade level on standardized math tests and at a tenth grade level on standardized reading tests).

African-American males, despite higher actual performances. African-American girls also see themselves as less powerful relating to teachers and peers than African-American males.[47] In fact, a recent nationwide poll found that "while family and community reinforcement sustain high levels of personal importance for black girls, these girls feel strong pressure from the school system and drop significantly in positive feelings about their teachers and their school work."[48] African-American females also remain more socially isolated and receive less peer attention than African-American males in racially desegregated classes.[49]

Professor Barbara Omolade writes that the educational experiences of African-American girls suggest a process of underdevelopment and disadvantage. This process has damaging effects on African-American girls equal to that which the "conspiracy to destroy African-American boys" has on boys.[50] Compounding the obstacles facing African-American females is the sexism, in addition to racism, that pervades the classroom. Stereotypical female sex roles demand docility and passivity, whereas effective learning demands energy and activity. Teachers' and male peers' low expectations of the intellectual ability of African-American girls stunts their love of learning.[51] Because this socialization process happens silently and subtlely, many do not perceive it as a problem of crisis proportions.

2. The Impact of Sexism, Sexual Harassment and Violence Against Women

Sexism, sexual harassment, and violence against women also contribute to the educational crisis facing African-American girls. Equity demands breaking down social stereotyping, which reinforces models of male strength and female weakness.[52] Single-sex settings may be anathema to this goal.

According to researcher Valerie Lee at the University of Michigan, a study of all-male private schools revealed that male teachers perpetuated sexism by teaching male students to view women as sex objects and by

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47. Grant, *supra* note 43, at 99.

48. AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF UNIVERSITY WOMEN, SHORTCHANGING GIRLS, SHORTCHANGING AMERICA 9 (1991).

49. Grant, *supra* note 43, at 98-111.

50. JAWANZA KUNJUFU, COUNTERING THE CONSPIRACY TO DESTROY BLACK BOYS 6 (1984).

51. Barbara Omolade, THE RISING SONS OF AFRICAN-AMERICAN WOMEN 143 (1994).

52. *See, e.g.,* Eleanor Linn, Nan D. Stein & Jackie Young, *Bitter Lessons for All: Sexual Harassment in Schools, in* SEXUALITY AND THE CURRICULUM 106, 118 (James T. Sears ed., 1992) (discussing current strategies for schools that implement major components of existing sexual-harassment complaint management and prevention programs).

socializing them to maintain power and control over women in sexual interactions. Dr. Lee believes that the lower incidence of teacher-initiated sexism in co-ed schools results from the presence of girls, which may "inhibit the development of runaway sexism."[53]

Sexual harassment and violence also influence girls' educational experiences.[54] According to the Department of Justice, 2.3 per thousand rape victims in the years from 1985 to 1988 were between sixteen and nineteen years old. The threat of rape lurks on school grounds: almost half of all violent crimes against teenagers ages twelve to nineteen occurred in school buildings, on school property, or in the street.[55] The presence of such harmful attitudes and behaviors toward female students significantly affects their decision to drop out of school.[56]

3. Girls and Special Education

A central problem frequently cited as a key indicator of the disparate treatment of African-American male students is their overreferral to classes for the educable mentally retarded. Often unmentioned is the fact that young women of all races are consistently *under*referred to special education. Reform therefore needs to target policies and practices concerning referrals for all African-Americans.

The data on this issue is dramatic. For example, "mentally retarded girls and women are less likely than males to receive needed services such as speech therapy or physical therapy."[57] Further, "the limited available data indicates that the male-female ratio [in special education] is even more disproportionate among . . . [African-American] children than among

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53. Valerie E. Lee, Helen M. Marks & Tina Knowles, Sexism in Single-Sex and Coeducational Secondary School Classrooms 22, paper prepared for presentation at the annual meeting of the American Sociological Association (Aug. 1991); *see also* Weber, *supra* note 3, at 1119 (noting that studies have found a higher incidence of sexist behavior and gender discrimination in boys who are educated in all-male schools).

54. *See* Mollman, *supra* note 6, at 170 ("Girls in co-ed classes are subjected to 'sexual harassment in forms ranging from systematic humiliation to physical abuse' and to 'interpersonal interactions designed to subtly reinforce sex differences and sex stereotyping. . . . Under such a regime girls' ability to think and express their thoughts independently and creatively is necessarily stifled.' ") (citations omitted).

55. CATHERINE J. WHITAKER & LISA D. BASTIAN, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE, TEENAGE VICTIMS 8 (1991).

56. NANCIE ZANE, NOW LEGAL DEFENSE AND EDUCATION FUND, IN THEIR OWN VOICES, YOUNG WOMEN TALK ABOUT DROPPING OUT 6 (1988). The students interviewed for this study, mostly African-American and Hispanic women, spoke of experiencing sexual harassment more than their male counterparts. *Id.* at 8.

57. SUSAN M. SHAFFER & JILL M. GREENBERG, VOCATIONAL EQUITY TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PROJECT, INDIVIDUAL EQUITY PLAN: GENDER AND DISABILITY (1990) (on file with *New York University Review of Law & Social Change*).

white children."[58] This data demonstrates the need to implement educational strategies that will broaden the quality of education and other supports to enhance the achievement of African-American students of both sexes.[59]

C. Is an Anti-Female Ideology an Aspect of these Initiatives?

1. Blaming Single Mothers

Debates concerning urban decline have increasingly focused on single mothers. Commentators blame them for urban problems such as crime, drugs and violence, and suggest that national social policy should focus on eliminating female-headed families.[60] The sex-specific nature of recent proposals, which exclude women, raises questions about whether proponents of single-sex schools similarly blame single mothers, rather than the effects of poverty, for the crisis affecting African-American males.

Spencer Holland cites the rise in single female-headed families living in poverty and the absence of working adult male role models within these families as evidence of the need to implement single-sex classes for African-American males.[61] According to Holland, "single parent, female-headed households in this nation's urban communities deny the young black male child a major vehicle necessary in the socialization process of all

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58. *Id.*

59. Dionne J. Jones, Cognitive Styles: Sex and Ethnic Differences, paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Washington, D.C. (Nov. 1986) (arguing that accomodating differences in learning styles between African-American and non-African-American students will help improve African-Americans' academic achievement, self-esteem, enjoyment of learning, basic skills, creativity, and independence).

60. *See, e.g.*, Martha L. Fineman, *Images of Mothers in Poverty Discourses*, 1991 DUKE L.J. 274 (1991) (analyzing discourses that describe single mother status as one of the primary predictors of poverty); Charles Murray, *The Coming White Underclass*, WALL ST. J., Oct. 29, 1993, at A14. *But see Who are the Poor?*, WASH. POST, Aug. 31, 1994, at A24 (citing a study proving that, contrary to popular belief, only one-fourth of poor households are headed by single mothers). Contrary to myth, most African-American single mothers are part of the working poor and comprise the majority of students in many evening college programs. Black single mothers face many layers of discrimination, based on their color, sex, marital status, and children. *See generally* BARBARA OMOLADE, IT'S A FAMILY AFFAIR: THE REAL LIVES OF BLACK SINGLE MOTHERS (1986).

61. Spencer H. Holland, *Providing Positive Male Role Models for Young Black Inner-City Males in the Primary Grades*, J. EQUITY & EXCELLENCE 1, 1 (1990). *See also* Andrew Hacker, *American Apartheid*, THE NEW YORK REVIEW OF BOOKS, Dec. 3, 1987, at 28. African-American families continue to be disproportionately headed by single mothers; female-headed families of various races and classes are increasing in number. *See* ANDREW HACKER, TWO NATIONS: BLACK AND WHITE, SEPARATE, HOSTILE, UNEQUAL 68, 74-75 (1992) (reporting that white households headed by women have increased from 5.3 percent in 1950 to 18.7 percent in 1993, while African-American households headed by women have increased from 17.2 percent in 1950 to 58.4 percent in 1993). Problems in the white family tend to be attributed to individual misfortune, while problems in the African-American family are seen as evidence of collective pathology.

boys, an adult male."[62] Holland extends his anti-female argument to include teachers. He believes that male teachers should separately instruct African-American male students, since females "cannot teach boys how to become men."[63]

2. *Implications of Women's and Girls' Absence from the Classroom*

Students learn sex-role socialization at school, but what is the content of that curriculum? Recent proposals may imply that the presence of females is responsible for the failure of urban public schools to educate the majority of children in this nation.[64] In truth, it is race and sex discrimination that are responsible for the poor economic and social conditions that deprive children of important skills, knowledge, and self-esteem.

The African-American male academy proposals refuse to eliminate the problems of sex-role socialization in the schools. None of the proposals to date identify whether and how specific curricula would address the historical and present role and impact of African-American women; none address what actions would be taken to eliminate the chauvinism that can emerge in any monocultural environment. Comments like the following suggest the need for concern about sexism in the schools:

- A teacher of a pilot all-male elementary school class in Detroit: "Girls are a little bit more mature at this age, and they may learn a little better, so they're often showing the boys up in class. That can lead to bad behavior, and just turning off to learning."[65]
- A third grader: "You do it better because there aren't no girls around to make you act silly."[66]
- A student in a Baltimore school that has implemented single-sex classes in an elementary schools: "It feels wonderful to be in here .... [G]irls get you in trouble because every time the girls will do something, the teacher gets on your case." Another boy

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62. Holland, *supra* note 61, at 1. Holland's view is by no means universal. Reviewing the literature on sex-role development and the socialization of young African-American men and women, Gloria Johnson Powell asserts that although children are clearly sex-typed, their degree of sex-typing is unrelated to that of the same-sex parent. Children choose to model the more nurturant model. Gloria Johnson Powell, *Coping With Adversity: The Psychosocial Development of Afro-American Children*, in THE PSYCHOSOCIAL DEVELOP-MENT OF MINORITY GROUP CHILDREN 62 (Gloria Johnson Powell ed., 1983). Heterogeneity among African-American families and their lifestyles means that the socialization of African-American boys will vary according to social circumstances and interactional patterns within their family and social networks. *Id.*

63. Holland, *supra* note 61, at 1.

64. Garrett v. Board of Education, 775 F. Supp. 1004, 1007 (E.D. Mich. 1991) ("[S]hould the male academies succeed, success would be attributed to the absence of girls rather than any of the educational factors that more probably caused the outcome.").

65. *Black Male Classes: Step Forward or Back?*, DETROIT NEWS & FREE PRESS, Nov. 18, 1990, at 14A.

66. *Id.*

says, "[t]he teacher looks at the boy's work, and the boy don't got nothing, but the girl is finished."[67]

Each of these statements focuses on girls as the cause of boys' underachievement. The statements also typify the legacy of biased interaction patterns present in co-ed classrooms.[68]

Two solutions to the problem of sexism in the schools are possible. One is to separate males and females into separate classes. The other is to take effective action to eliminate such biases. For example, schools could provide continuing preservice and inservice training to teachers so that they can identify and eliminate biased practices.[69] To our knowledge, no school administration has initiated discussion of such a remedy between women's educational equity advocates and proponents of proposals to address the needs of African-American males. This type of collaboration could effectively build on what we already know about gender equity in schools, rather than ignore it.

3. The Athletic Model: Women's Equity Concerns

Some proponents of schools for African-American males assert that single-sex schools will replicate the male athletic team. Inherent in this claim is the belief that a sports team constitutes an appropriate model of environment and organization, well-suited for nurturing boys'·success. Women's equity proponents, however, find such a paradigm problematic. The atmosphere created by an all-male team promotes values that do not consistently foster the development of people of all levels of ability and talent. Such groups may also support attitudes of male supremacy and actions hostile to women. A growing body of research on sexual assaults on college campuses by the National Institute of Mental Health suggests that male athletes disproportionately perpetrate these violent acts.[70]

Schools, as microcosms of the larger society, tend to manifest the same forms of social inequality that are present in the world outside.[71] Thus, all-male environments are likely to reproduce and reinforce negative ideas about women. In light of explicit anti-female statements and the implications of some proposed strategies, such concerns warrant careful consideration.

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67. Debra Viadero, *Baltimore Class Tests Theory of Providing 'Positive Role Model' for Young Black Boys*, EDUCATION WEEK, Feb. 13, 1991, at 17.

68. *See, e.g.*, Mollman, *supra* note 6, at 170 (claiming that teachers in co-ed classrooms treat boys and girls differently, giving more time and attention to boys).

69. David Sadker & Myra Sadker, *The Treatment of Sex Equity in Teacher Education*, in HANDBOOK FOR ACHIEVING SEX EQUITY THROUGH EDUCATION (Susan S. Klein ed., 1985).

70. Gerald Eskenazi, *The Male Athlete and Sexual Assault*, N.Y. TIMES, June 3, 1990, at A1.

71. Omolade, *supra* note 51, at 24.

D.   The Significance of Title IX

Proposals for African-American male schools violate Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972.[72] Title IX provides in pertinent part: "No person . . . shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance . . . ." And although the statute provides an exception for "public educational institutions with traditional and continuing [single-sex] admissions policies,"[73] this exception does not apply to newly created schools.

Congress enacted Title IX to achieve sex equity in schools receiving federal financial assistance. This legislation resulted from political planning and organizing following the documentation of the school system's negative, unequal treatment of women. Prior to its enactment, girls suffered from disproportionately low allocations of school athletic budgets, less space and equipment for physical education and sports, and exclusion from courses that prepare students for higher-paid, unionized employment. Schools routinely discouraged girls from enrolling in college preparatory math and science courses. Historically, boys' schools, whether elite academic schools or schools teaching vocational and technical skills, barred girls from admission completely. Guidance counselors in other schools regularly steered girls toward traditional "pink collar" career tracks or professions already dominated by women. Job placement coordinators often accepted the gender and race specifications required by employers who participated in student work-study programs. Schools denied young women who were pregnant or already parents the option of remaining in regular education. If these women insisted on continuing their education, they were relegated to "special schools" for pregnant girls, where they found a relatively limited curriculum. Schools frequently approved sex-specific scholarships.[74]

Title IX has provided key advances for women's educational equity. The Eastern District Court of Michigan ruled in August 1991 that single-sex schools violate the Equal Protection Clause of the U.S. Constitution,[75] Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, Michigan's Elliot Larsen Civil Rights Act,[76] and the Michigan School Code.[77] Similarly, in Milwaukee and Miami, the Boards of Education followed legal advice and implemented coeducational schools.[78] Title IX has also benefitted male students

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72. 20 U.S.C. § 1681 (1988 & Supp. IV 1992).

73. 20 U.S.C. § 1681 (a)(5) (1988 & Supp. IV 1992).

74. *See generally* Leslie R. Wolfe, Diane E. Thompson & Theresa Cusick, *Educational Equity, in* WOMEN AND THE LAW 13:1-13:26 (Carol H. Lefcourt ed., 1992 & Supp. 1993).

75. Garrett v. Board of Education, 775 F. Supp. 1004, 1008 (E.D. Mich. 1991).

76. MICH. COMP. LAWS §§ 37.2102, 37.2302(a), 37.2402 (West 1985 & Supp. 1994).

77. *Garrett*, 775 F. Supp. at 1010-12.

78. *See* NAACP LEGAL DEFENSE & EDUCATIONAL FUND, INC., STATEMENT ON PROPOSALS FOR SEPARATE SCHOOLS FOR AFRICAN-AMERICAN MALE PUPILS 17, 17 n.25;

by eliminating legal, if not social, barriers to all nontraditional courses of study, particularly in occupational education.[79]

Public school systems with poor overall levels of education services have not realized fully the potential benefits of Title IX.[80] Proposals to establish single-sex educational programs for African-American male students revive questions about the ways in which we define educational equity for all students, particularly for African-American male and female students. We believe that our vision must transcend generalizations based on gender and formal definitions of equality between males and females. It must instead move to an examination of what individual students of both sexes need to fulfill potential adult roles as workers, parents, and effective members of a democratic society.

III
RECOMMENDATIONS FOR EDUCATIONAL CHANGE

The social and economic crisis of African-American males *is* grave, particularly within a society that relegates vast numbers of men of the African-American community to a lifelong experience of unemployment and social marginality.[81] The recent debate about single-sex schools demonstrates that women's educational equity advocates must work more closely with colleagues on issues related to male sex-role socialization in the schools.

In addition, current proposals to address the needs of African-American males serve an important purpose in refocusing attention on persistent issues in achieving quality public education. These initiatives provide an opportunity for new levels of collaboration among educational practitioners, researchers, and advocates of both race and gender equity in urban education settings. This collaboration must address the needs of all students.

In particular, we must continue to move ahead in order to educate the public about the need to support equity in school funding so that poor districts get more resources than rich districts, not less. We urge school districts to strengthen affirmative action policies concerning hiring male (particularly minority male) teachers and to develop programs that encourage young men and women to consider teaching careers. Community-based organizations, religious institutions, and advocacy organizations can

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Mollman, *supra* note 6, at 151 n.9 (noting that Miami integrated its all-male program after the Office of Civil Rights of the Department of Education advised it that a single-sex program was illegal).

79. *See e.g.*, Mississippi Univ. for Women v. Hogan, 458 U.S. 718 (1982) (invalidating state nursing school's policy of excluding male students).

80. This is especially true in racially segregated schools in districts that spend less per capita than they spend on students of either sex in wealthier school districts.

81. *See* George C. Galster, *Polarization, Place, and Race*, 71 N.C. L. REV. 1421 (1993); Weber, *supra* note 3, at 1099.

play a large role in addressing the needs of young people in communities throughout the nation. Finally, we urge school districts to implement on a system-wide basis strategies that focus on raising self-esteem and academic achievement of all students. These strategies should incorporate models of education that are multicultural and that promote gender equity in the schools. The following specific recommendations outline such a strategy.

A. Effecting Institutional Change

- Develop and implement a "whole youth" policy. This policy would support stronger links between the home and the workplace and impact on parent/community involvement in schools. It would develop schools as multiservice centers and workplaces as sites of learning.
- Establish more flexible systems of continuing education, childcare, and occupational training.
- Transform schools from places of formalized learning into community education and social service centers with a multi-generational focus.
- Integrate workplace experience with the development of academic and vocational skills.
- Use methods of instruction and evaluation that acknowledge different learning styles and multiple "intelligences."
- Disseminate current research findings and information on race and gender bias to appropriate government officials and policy makers.

B. Supporting Educators and Advocates

- Encourage and develop educators who have attained high standards of knowledge and practice in multicultural, gender-fair education through preservice and inservice teacher education, coaching, mentoring and evaluation.
- Provide additional training support to teachers and social service providers who have demonstrated a desire to act as advocates for young women and men within the educational, juvenile justice, and social welfare systems.
- Train teachers in conflict management and to recognize and eliminate sexual harassment as a part of the preservice teacher education curriculum.

C. Assuring Full Equity within Education

- Identify and document young people's reasons for choosing early parenthood or for interrupting their formal education;

promote acceptance of more flexible schedules for college entry.

- Provide support for young people whose family roles conflict with strong academic goals.
- Promote research on how peers shape young people's academic and personal self-concept in negative and positive ways.

D.   Suggestions for Responding to Proposals for Single-Sex Programs

- Call for public hearings to discuss these proposals.
- Provide testimony that raises concerns about how these programs will resolve successfully the issues they purport to address.
- Press for collection and publication of attendance statistics, achievement test scores by level and subject, and employment data concerning teachers' race and gender.
- Ask for documentation when proposals offer no support concerning their development.
- Convene roundtables of local women's groups and/or educational researchers to discuss implications for achieving gender equity.
- Write op-ed pieces and letters to the editor that express concerns from an equity perspective.
- Contact the state Title IX coordinator, regional Office for Civil Rights, and school district superintendent to file a complaint.
- Consult NOW LDEF regarding legal implications of proposals.

CONCLUSION

The arguments against the current proposals to address the critical needs of African-American males require careful consideration.

If the single-sex, single-race experiments that are already underway fail, some may conclude that uneducable students are the problem. Should the experiments succeed, the conclusion may be that segregation by race and sex is a legitimate approach to effective education. These conclusions, however, overlook the impact of sex and race discrimination, not just on women and African-Americans, but on white students as well. These approaches also undermine the mission of public education in a nation striving to fulfill its mandate to create a democratic, multiracial society. Rather than focusing on the individuals affected by discrimination as separate groups, public school systems should focus on eliminating the harmful behaviors and providing the resources needed—both human and material—to change the environment of discrimination for *all* students.

Constance Clayton, Superintendent of Schools in Philadelphia, has observed that "the paramount public policy issue today is whether this country accepts as inevitable the existence of a permanent underclass."[82] In other words, the issue is not whether educators know how to educate all children. They do. The issue is whether our public policy supports education for all. Race- and sex-segregated public schools validate separation and signal a willingness to turn back the clock on efforts to grapple with and overcome the particular challenges presented in creating a truly democratic, multicultural society.

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82. Constance Clayton, *Children of Value: We Can Educate All Our Children*, NATION, July 24/31, 1989, at 132.