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Examining Male Education:

Discipline and Classroom Structure in a Single-Sex Elementary Classroom

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Educational Studies 400

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Trinity College

The recent and ever popular debate concerning single-sex education has been a heated one due to these classrooms gaining popularity and support. This controversy focuses on both positive and negative elements as to why these educational settings should or should not be supported. For example, concerning those who support single-sex education, some teachers believe that this type of setting makes the students feel that “they’re safe to be able to explore and take a chance and not be afraid of failure” (Frahm & Gottlieb 2004). Others take a more cautious approach of support and claim that “if there might be some educational benefit, then why prohibit it?” (Frahm & Gottlieb 2004).

When discussing such a controversial topic, one cannot neglect the opposing side of this debate. Those in opposition believe that once again education could be moving toward a separate but equal mentality that may cause more harm than good to all students involved. The division between the sexes could create problems for the students in the future, especially because our world today is so diverse and striving toward equality. Overall, the small society created in the classroom would not be representative of the outside world and as a result be detrimental to the learning process.

Throughout the exploration of this difficult topic and the consideration of whether or not one should support the separation of the sexes in education, there are many different aspects that must be considered. One prevalent and important area of education to explore concerning this topic is discipline. It has become part of the controversy because some feel these classrooms are the prime forums for troubled students to receive the discipline and attention that they deserve and need, while in a controlled environment. But, as one may predict, there are also those who avidly oppose this idea and who feel

that separation is not the answer. Rather, students should just be punished on an individual basis and returned to their coeducational classrooms.

Because of the opposing views and the array of topics that the single-sex education debate has to offer, it is definitely something that should be explored further. One needs to delve into these issues, such as discipline, in hopes of drawing some conclusions and making sense of the variety of views resulting from this quandary. Only by doing this can one truly see the detriments and benefits of single-sex environments.

### **Research Question**

My research addresses male centered education at the elementary level. I examine what effects the sex-segregated classrooms have on the boys that are enrolled in them. Most importantly, I want to look at the types of discipline used in a local, single-sex all male classroom. My research question asks the following: What effects do sex-segregated classrooms have on discipline practices for boys? Do the discipline practices differ in single sex male classrooms from those of “regular” mixed sex classrooms? If these children who are placed in the all male classrooms are labeled as “discipline problems” upon entry to the room, does their label change during and after the school year? This research will further explore the idea of what it means to be labeled a “discipline problem” and if this stigma is possible to overcome by being enrolled in a same-sex environment.

### **Case for Significance**

The majority of research concerning single-sex education is primarily focused on females and their experiences in these unique environments. There are numerous benefits that are described concerning placing females in a classroom that is lacking

males. For example, one primary area of concentration is the attention that girls receive, specifically positive acknowledgement. When in a mixed-sex environment, girls receive less attention than their counterparts. Literature mentions that females are less likely to be called on by teachers and more likely to be ignored (Signorella, Frieze, & Hershey, 1996). This frequently occurs because male students are seen as discipline problems and need to be controlled; therefore they become the focus of the teacher in the classroom. Single-sex educational research also focuses on the academic content and how it affects the females. What are specifically of concern are the areas of mathematics and science. Once again females get ignored because the material is geared toward males. In order for them to excel in these areas, they must be separated from males.

The contribution that will come from my research concerns addressing this lack of single-sex education information. When discussing something that has two opposite elements, such as male and female education, it is vital to look at both sides. I will provide some insight as to what occurs in an all male classroom. This includes the positive elements that exist in these classrooms which can be contrasted to what is known about all female classrooms. Perhaps as a result of my attention to this specific environment, single-sex male classrooms will be examined more closely and overall supported.

In conjunction to this idea of single-sex education, I place emphasis on discipline practices that occur in each environment. Previous research tends to focus on discipline only looking at mixed-sex environments. The literature generally does not adequately discuss and describe discipline, specifically what is seen in an all male classroom. However, there is ample information stressing that boys are punished more than girls and

that their punishments are more severe (Skiba, Michael, Nardo & Peterson, 2000). There is no explanation of what happens to these trends in single-sex rooms. My research addresses these voids of information by exploring the all male classrooms and finding differences between “normal” classrooms and these “special” environments. I place an emphasis on discipline and try to draw conclusions about why the differences come about. I focus on the relationship between the teacher, overall classroom environment, and the students in hopes to provide others with more information about these atypical settings.

### **Thesis**

Due to the nature of co-educational classrooms and single-sex classrooms, there is an apparent difference between the discipline styles that are needed to maintain order in each setting. Because of the close bond between the male teacher and his all male students in the specific classroom that I studied, discipline tends to be fairer and less severe than previous research claims. In addition, as a result of this unique style the students who enter the single sex environment as “discipline problems” tend to lose this label by the end of the academic year.

### **Literature Review**

As I have stated in my case for significance, there is a plethora of information which focuses on the female aspect of single-sex education. The literature discusses the positive elements of single-sex environments for females, as opposed to coeducational classrooms. For example, with “boys acting out in every area more than girls” they “require more teacher and administration attention and time” (Alvord, 1979). One would assume that as a result of this, females automatically receive less attention and would

benefit from an environment that boys are not a part of. Signorella and colleagues confirm this when they discuss how females receive more attention and are ignored less frequently in single-sex environments, in addition to getting an opportunity to explore more subject areas that boys may monopolize (1996). This literature does not cover what I am most interested in, single-sex male education and what advantages or disadvantages it may have for its student body.

In addition, discipline is an issue that is heavily stressed in educational literature and it is what I am primarily interested in for my research. There is an emphasis of past literature concerning who gets disciplined more and why. Numerous studies have come to the conclusion that males receive more discipline than females overall (Skiba, et al., 2000). But, another aspect of discipline to consider is the type of punishments that students receive and the severity. Skiba and colleagues claim that “boys are referred to the office and receive a range of disciplinary consequences at a significantly greater rate than girls” (2000). Their data further reveals that “boys are over four times as likely as girls to be referred to the office, suspended, or subjected to corporal punishment” (Skiba, et al. 2000). This emphasizes the dramatic differences in discipline for boys and girls. Literature by Linda Raffaele Mendez and Howard Knoff, also confirms these findings. They found that “black males were over-represented in suspensions across almost all infraction types,” (Raffaele Mendez & Knoff, 2003). This information supports my reasoning for studying male discipline, yet it lacks the coeducational component that I want to incorporate.

What I found was of particular interest and that connects to my research, was that students are also aware of the discipline differences in the schools. For example, girls in

one school felt that “boys got blamed for things more than girls” in addition to a unanimous view that “boys were treated harsher” than girls (Davies, 1978). I plan on supporting this in my research using student interviews. This is very important because if students perceive that the differences are present, it could affect their overall behavior and self esteem.

Finally, to connect to the idea of labeling students as “discipline problems” I looked to Ann Arnett Ferguson’s piece, entitled Bad Boys. This book devotes an entire chapter to students, specifically males, who receive these negative labels and must be separated from the rest of the student body. Her argument focuses on “the punishing room” where “children are sent by adults when they get in trouble” (Ferguson, 2000). This is a prime example of what discipline practices are occurring in schools today and it specifically has connections to my research, which is focused on an all male classroom that assigns students based on behavioral problems.

Overall, my research will build on all the previous research that I have found concerning discipline and single-sex education. I will join these two topics and fill in gaps of information, specifically concerning the discipline that is practiced in an all male classroom. I will examine single-sex classrooms as an alternative to harsh punishments and suspensions, that previous literature claims are the answers to students with “discipline problems.” I will challenge this suspension practice by showing that the students who get assigned to single-sex classrooms instead, do so in hopes that their behaviors will be corrected over the course of the school year, as a result of a more controlled environment.

## **Methodology**

To properly research this topic as to which I had known little information about, there were several different approaches that I took to have the most variety and obtain the greatest amount of information possible with the time and resources that were available. Because of this, I chose two different ways to collect information, which included observations and interviews.

I first chose an elementary school in Hartford, Lincoln Elementary School<sup>1</sup>, as the location of where I would conduct my research. The reason for this choice was that I had previously worked at this school and I had become familiar with the fact that this particular school contained a single-sex male classroom, which was the focus of my project. After obtaining permission from the principal of Lincoln Elementary School, I contacted the teacher of the all male classroom, Mr. James<sup>2</sup>, and we set up times when I would come in for observations of his classroom.

I completed five classroom observations overall during October and November of 2005. Four of these observations were three hour periods, from 9 AM until 12 PM. During this time I would sit in the back of the classroom and take extensive field notes, specifically focusing on discipline practices and the relationship between the students and Mr. James. I was extremely careful to note any specific situations or events that exemplified Mr. James' discipline beliefs and the reactions of the students. In addition to this, I was also able to witness SFA periods, where Mr. James would teach a mixed-sex classroom. I found this of particular interest because it allowed me to see if his discipline styles varied greatly from those used in his single-sex classroom.

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<sup>1</sup> Lincoln Elementary School is a pseudonym that will be used throughout the paper to refer to the actual school that was used for observations

<sup>2</sup> Mr. James is a pseudonym that will be used as well throughout the paper to refer to the teacher of the all male classroom

One observation consisted of six hours, from 9 AM until 3 PM. This observation period allowed me to follow the students through an entire school day. I was able to see the students interact with other students, in addition to other teachers. For example, I witnessed a physical education period and watched the students interact with their male gym teacher as well as the female students of the all female classroom.

Overall, I thought that observations were a key element to any qualitative study. In order to write about a specific setting, especially an environment that one knows little about, it is important to become emerged in this setting. I needed to experience this environment firsthand so that I could make accurate observations about what occurs in the all male classroom. If I were to only ask others about the events and interactions that happen in this special environment, I might have received biased views. By being an outsider, I can note exactly what I see happening. Although this is an excellent source of evidence, it is important to keep in mind that my presence in the classroom can affect those in it. For example, the students may exhibit better behavior when they know that other people are present. To try to balance this effect, it is important to conduct several different observations in hopes of maintaining the most accurate accounts possible.

Another vital component of my research process was the conducting of numerous interviews. Before carrying out any of the interviews I had to first obtain informed consent. The informed consent forms can be found in Appendix A and Appendix B. I carried out a total of 11 interviews that were divided into three different categories: Mr. James interview, student interviews, and a vice principal interview with Mr. Smith<sup>3</sup>.

My first interview took place with Mr. James. It consisted of 22 questions (Appendix C) that covered a wide range of topics. I was interested in finding out the

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<sup>3</sup> Mr. Smith is the pseudonym used to refer to the vice principal of the elementary school.

origins of the single-sex classrooms, how the students were chosen for the classrooms, and other logistics of the environment. In addition, my primary focus was on discipline and questions concerning his specific discipline beliefs and practices. I also wanted to know about his background and how this affected his teaching.

The next set of interviews that I conducted was with nine students in the all male classroom. All students were given consent forms, but only nine were chosen because they had returned their forms to me signed by a parent or guardian. I asked each student eight questions (Appendix D) that focused on what their classroom was like, the discipline in their classroom, and how other teachers treat students concerning discipline.

The final interview that I conducted was with Mr. Smith, the vice principal of Lincoln Elementary School. I asked him a total of 12 questions (Appendix E). These were primarily focused on the discipline practices in the entire school and what he sees as the vice principal. I also included questions about the single-sex classroom to gain a different perspective from Mr. James and my observations.

Interviews are a very important part of qualitative research because they allow those who are being studied to have a voice. As opposed to using just my observations and drawing my own conclusions, the interviews allowed me to gain understanding of occurrences and strengthen my research project overall. I chose these participants because they were all involved some way in the single-sex male classroom. In addition, they could all provide insight as to what occurs in this school and specific classroom environment concerning discipline practices.

### **Lincoln Elementary School**

All of my research was conducted in Lincoln Elementary School. This school is located in Hartford, Connecticut and houses pre-kindergarten through sixth grade classes. As of the 2003-04 school year there were about 534 students enrolled in the school. The student body is comprised of 98.9% minority students, primarily Black (11.6%) and Hispanic (86.5%). In addition, over 95% of students enrolled in Lincoln Elementary School were eligible for free or reduced lunch. Also, about 74% of the students in the school come from a non-English speaking home. (Statistics taken from Strategic School Profile, 2003-04) Concerning single-sex education, the school has one all female and one all male fifth grade classroom.

### **RTC**

The RTC is known as the responsible thinking classroom. It is cited by Mr. Smith as the solution to discipline problems in the school as a whole. Students are sent to this location if they are misbehaving in class and cannot be controlled by the teacher in the classroom. The philosophy of RTC states the following:

Students have the right to learn and teachers have the right to teach in safety. No one has the right to disrupt, to prevent other students from learning, or to violate the rights of others. (Ford & Venetis, 2005)

The purpose of this room is for students to be separated from the environment that they were causing problems in. They have to write about their problems and try to come to solutions as to what steps the student will take to behave better and follow rules. When the forms are completed, the student returns to his or her regular classroom.

Some teachers utilize this resource on a regular basis, sending their students out whenever they become too challenging. Other teachers, like Mr. James, rarely send their students to this room. Mr. James does not send his students to RTC because he feels that

this action “undermines the idea of community” in the classroom. In short, it is better for him to deal with the students and work with them, as opposed to sending them away for other people to deal with.

### **Mr. James’ Classroom**

When one walks into Mr. James’ classroom the first thing that you notice is the absence of light. Mr. James keeps the lights off in his classroom, unless it is dark outside. This is done to set the tone, creating a calm and relaxed environment. When examining the room further, there are many other elements that highlight the distinctive nature of this classroom.

Mr. James has the students arrange their desks in very specific formations. There are clusters of three to four desks throughout the room. This is done so that the students can cooperatively work together and converse when necessary. In addition to this, each cluster, or group of students, comes up with a name that is used by everyone in the classroom, including Mr. James. Once again, this produces a more intimate atmosphere and encourages the students to work together.

Another key element that facilitates an integrative environment is the class point system. Points are awarded for students and groups who demonstrate good deeds and good behaviors. In addition, the entire class can earn points for similar behaviors. It is especially important when other teachers compliment students in this classroom, so they receive points for this as well. When a specific amount of points are achieved, the students get rewarded with a pizza party, which they take very seriously.

A third important element of Mr. James’ classroom is the rug area located in the back of the room. This specific location serves several purposes. When discussing

certain issues, such as health or emotions, the students will congregate at the back of the room and Mr. James will lead the discussion. The comfortable environment allows the students to let down their guard and open up to each other. The rug is also referred to as the “chill out” area by Mr. James and his students. When someone in the class is misbehaving, Mr. James will tell this student to go to the back of the room and cool down in the rug area. It gives the students a chance to regain control of themselves and return to the rest of the class when they are ready to participate.

One final aspect to note is the use of nicknames in this classroom. Mr. James and his students together decide on nicknames for all students in this class. This is done through class discussion and in some cases, intense debate. The students respond to each other by these names, in addition to Mr. James calling the students by them as well. This is just another example of how he draws his classroom and students together. These are unique names that no one else in the school is familiar with or uses, only those in the class are privy to this secret information. The results are an even closer and personal bond with those in the class.

### **Mr. James’ Students**

There are 17 boys in the classroom when everyone is in attendance. This classroom is at a fifth grade level, although all students may not be what is thought of as the “fifth grade age,” nine or ten. Older students are assigned to this classroom when they are held back and this is the only setting where they may succeed and pass to the next grade.

The students in Mr. James’ class are very unique, and the assignment of them into this classroom is the reason. The majority of students who enter the all male classroom

do so because they are labeled as “discipline problems.” This can be defined as a student who has difficulty being controlled by a teacher and frequently disrupts classroom activity. Teachers will gather together before the school year begins and discuss the students that need to be assigned to classrooms for the next school year. They look for these “discipline problems” and usually assign them to Mr. James’ class. If there are not enough of these students to fill the classroom, “regular” boys will fill the remaining seats, those not labeled as “problems.”

What is interesting to note, is that the all female classroom is assigned somewhat differently. The girls are placed in that environment as a result of social reasons. For instance, certain girls do not get along with each other and refuse to cooperate, so they must be separated. One will be placed in the all female classroom, and the other girl will go to the coeducational classroom.

Focusing on the boys in particular, there is a wide range of what “problems” these boys may have. The spectrum ranges from no problems at all, to more severe ones. Some students in the classroom are placed there simply because they are disruptive. This does not necessarily mean that they are dangerous to other classmates; they just talk consistently throughout the class period and keep the teacher from focusing on the rest of the classroom. Other students have more serious problems. They are consistently disruptive, yelling, screaming, and swearing. They have to be removed from classrooms because of their behavior and in some cases other students had to be removed from their classes because of safety reasons. One student in his class even has a parole officer because of problems he has had in the past. One can imagine the difficulties that could arise in this type of environment full of so many “problem” students.

Upon entering the classroom, at first I could not tell which boys were the “problems” and which ones were not. They all appeared to be very well behaved. The moment that I walked in, the entire class stood up and said “Good morning Erin, welcome to our class.” One student even came over to shake my hand and welcome me because he was the “greeter” of the room. Only after several observations was I able to witness several events of behavioral problems concerning the students; but once again they were not as severe as I would have imagined.

### **Mr. James**

Mr. James is a man in his forties, who not only took on this all male classroom, but introduced the idea of it to the school. Five years ago he approached the principal with the idea of instating single-sex classrooms in the school. He had seen it done in other local elementary schools, and felt it would be a good addition at Lincoln Elementary School. As a result of his efforts, he has been teaching a single-sex classroom for four years now. He feels that this setting provides him with a “challenge to take the kids and turn them around.”

To better understand Mr. James and his abilities, it is important to know some of his background, not only in teaching, but his life as well. He has been teaching for many years, this is his seventh year in Hartford, but he has previously taught in California as well. He has attending numerous training sessions, which he has personally chosen to be a part of. These sessions included information on students with ADHD, ADD, and students with behavioral problems. Overall, he feels that the best training he has received is just experiencing life, a “desire to get better,” and his background.

There are numerous events in his past that Mr. James cites as being important, especially when using them to be able to relate to his students, but one event stands above the rest. At four years old, he lost his father, when he died unexpectedly. This alone provides a strong connection between Mr. James and his students. He recognizes that many of these students either do not have a father present in their lives or any male figure to serve as a positive role model. Mr. James commented, "I know what it is like to be fatherless. My students are kids who need a brochure on life, and that is me." This exemplifies the tight connection that he has with his students and his dedication to them.

### **Is harsh discipline the answer?**

Harsh discipline is not the answer for all students, especially those who are known to have behavioral or discipline problems. This is contrary to what current literature claims. When students enter Mr. James' classroom they are exposed to a completely different environment than the surrounding classrooms. This is due to the fact that Mr. James has his own goals for his students. He stated the following:

The intended goal in my class is that students will become better individuals when they leave me. Discipline is not about the pencil thrown across the room; it is how you want your students to make choices in the future.

He realizes that these children need more than just someone yelling at them and sending them to the office. That is what they have been experiencing for the majority of their lives. What they do need is a good role model that will show them how to behave and treat others. The students will respond more to caring individuals who are patient and listen to their needs. Overall, Mr. James claims that "my discipline is directly related to the type of person that I am," and this is shown through his actions and behavior.

Because of these beliefs, Mr. James feels the need to become the role model for his students. He wants his boys to “feel good and feel safe with themselves.” This environment allows him to “speak about the importance of becoming a man,” which is very important to him especially concerning him being a positive role model. In conjunction to this, Mr. James wants to “develop well rounded young men that respect women and girls.”

During my observations I noticed countless instances where this idea of teacher and role model combined became apparent. A prime example was Mr. James’ lesson about hearts. He called all of the students to the back of the room to sit on the rug and get comfortable. Once they were all seated quietly, Mr. James drew a heart on the board. He encouraged all of the students to participate, but when he was talking they sat quietly. The students were asked to talk about what was in their hearts. Some students had pictures of their family while others just voiced their beliefs. The class talked about relationships, which Mr. James facilitated. He also encouraged the students to turn to another boy in the class and tell him something nice about him. The class shared these accolades with each other. The final discussion was about crying, where Mr. James told his students that crying was perfectly acceptable for men and that it should not be seen as a weakness.

This event was incredibly important, especially when demonstrating how Mr. James serves as a role model. He encourages the students to talk about themselves, their emotions, and their feelings. He tries to combat the idea of a “macho” male that the students may learn from their home environment or the media. Mr. James wants these

students to grow to be caring, responsible men, which he teaches them by having the students learn from his example.

Another vital component to this alternative type of discipline style that lacks harshness is the connection between the students and the teacher. The environment first sets the tone of this connection. Mr. James strives to create a classroom that is a “safe environment” where “if you make a mistake it’s O.K.” (Mr. James). The perfect label that Mr. James used to refer to his classroom was “a launching pad for student exploration.” He also recognizes that his classroom “has developed into a very positive setting that male students look forward to be a part of.”

### **Noticing the Differences**

Mr. James and the students in his classroom mention that there are clear differences between what types of discipline are practiced in the all male room and the coeducational classrooms. The differences were also apparent through classroom observations.

When I interviewed the students they brought this discipline distinction to life. I asked the students if other teachers treated them differently than Mr. James does, such as when they are in mix-sex SFA groups; to this question I received almost a unanimous “yes.” The students explained to me that other teachers scream and send them out of their classroom, either to the office or the “Responsible Thinking Classroom.” Their responses were as follows:

- Teachers scream and send you to the office or RTC.
- They don’t give students a chance.
- They bother me.
- They give me work to do when I misbehave.
- They make me put my head on my desk.

This shows that the teachers choose to rid themselves of the difficult student by sending them out of the classroom. They also take a more severe approach, by yelling at the students. They are not willing to take the time to make a special connection with these difficult students, by listening to their needs and giving them chances to discuss their problems and why they are misbehaving.

I witnessed this approach several times during my observations. During SFA when students in the all male classes were dispersed in the coeducational classrooms, problems would occur. On numerous occasions Mr. James' students would be sent back to his classroom from other rooms because teachers would refuse to handle these students. They simply caused too much problems in their classrooms and could not be handled. Upon returning to Mr. James' room, he would send them to the rug area, where they would calm down and quickly be ready to return to the classroom.

Also during the student interviews I asked the boys to tell me about how Mr. James treats them when someone misbehaves in their classroom. The students gave me the following responses:

- He tells the students to be by themselves, sit on the carpet, and chill out.
- He takes away special privileges and fun stuff.
- He tries to talk with the students. He doesn't go "hard ass" on us.
- He gives students chances and jokes around with them.
- He doesn't scream.

It is clear from these answers that the students see the differences between discipline in mixed sex classrooms and in their single sex classrooms. Also, Mr. James' particular discipline style becomes apparent through what his students say about him. The students understand that Mr. James cares about them on a more personal level and is willing to work with them and listen to their needs.

One must understand for Mr. James' discipline style to work, there are several things that must be accomplished. The students need to know that they can trust Mr. James and be open with him and their fellow students. Mr. James told me the following about his close connection to his students: "I tell them directly that I care and love them. There is no room for being subtle. Emotions must be clear; they get too many mixed messages everywhere else." Also, the students need to respect their teacher and know that he means business for discipline to succeed. He told me, "I demand respect. I tell them who I am, show them what I can do, and then I listen to them because I have to show them so they know how to follow." This is a multiple step process that needs to be carried out to achieve success.

### **"Discipline Problems"**

The idea of labeling students as "discipline problems" is something that should not be done due to its detrimental effects. However, this practice occurs quite often and at times cannot be avoided, specifically for those students who are enrolled in Mr. James' classroom. They are placed in this environment because of the label that they receive. What is one of the most important aspects of this classroom is the fact that even though students may have this label placed on them until their enrollment in the all male classroom, there is an opportunity for students to overcome and eventually lose it throughout and after the school year.

When asked whether Mr. James sees changes in his students throughout the school year he responded:

I do see differences between the beginning of the year to the end. The students develop and become more responsible yet don't always make the right choices. I have witnessed students –hostile/aggressive- take responsibility for their bad behavior. Usually when one student apologizes then the others will. I have been

able to make the right connection with the right student that all others will follow. He was/is a very violent student (had violent outbursts where the classroom had to be cleared, knocking over desks, telling the teacher off) who has bought into my philosophy. He believes that what goes on in my class is right and that being in my class will make them men.

This implies that one can see differences in the students of the all male classroom throughout the school year. There is potential for students to move out of the “discipline problem” category and become more accepted by other teachers, administration, and the student body.

### **Conclusion**

According to Mr. James and the students in the all male classroom, discipline practices differ a great deal from those of coed classrooms because of the students’ needs. Mr. James’ unique approach is less severe and fairer than that of other teachers and what previous research claims. He personally deals with each student’s problems and avoids simply sending the students out of the classroom to receive discipline for their bad behavior. In addition, boys in the single-sex classroom appear to respond positively to the specific discipline environment that has been created. The close bond between the students and their teacher allows the children to face their problems without being sent out of the classroom and severely reprimanded. As a result, students are exposed to a positive role model who cares about their well being. Also, through the practices in this classroom, students who are known as “discipline problems” at the beginning of the school year have the potential in this setting to change their label. Overall, students who struggle with behavioral problems in “normal” classrooms will benefit the most from being enrolled in this specific setting.

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Appendix A

Teacher and Vice Principal Informed Consent Form

INFORMED CONSENT

I, \_\_\_\_\_ (please print name) hereby consent to my participation in this research project.

This study involves an investigation of male education, specifically discipline and classroom structure in elementary education. I understand that all of my responses in this study are completely confidential and will be used only for research purposes. I understand that my participation in this project is completely voluntary. I further understand that I am free to withdraw my participation at any time without any penalty.

The benefits of this project are to gain information about single gender classrooms and the differences in behavior and discipline that occur. There are no potential physical risks that are anticipated.

If I have any questions regarding this project or wish to have further information, I am free to contact Erin Michelson at (860) 987-4975 or Andrea Dyrness in the Education Department at Trinity College.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

Appendix B

Student Interview Informed Consent Form

INFORMED CONSENT

I, \_\_\_\_\_ (please print name) hereby consent to my son's participation in this research project.

This study involves an investigation of male education, specifically discipline and classroom structure in elementary education. I understand that all of my child's responses in this study are completely confidential and will be used only for research purposes. I understand that my child's participation in this project is completely voluntary. I further understand that my child is free to withdraw his or her participation at any time without any penalty.

The benefits of this project are to gain information about single gender classrooms and the differences in behavior and discipline that occur. There are no potential physical risks that are anticipated.

If I have any questions regarding this project or wish to have further information, I am free to contact Erin Michelson at (860) 987-4975 or Andrea Dyrness in the Education Department at Trinity College.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## Appendix C

### Teacher Interview Questions

- 1.) When did the all male/female classrooms first come into existence?
- 2.) Why did this school choose to have single sex classrooms in the school?
- 3.) How are the students chosen for these classrooms?
- 4.) Have these classrooms always been at a fifth grade level?
- 5.) Why did you choose this specific grade as opposed to others for this educational setting?
- 6.) What do you think are the key differences between the all male and the all female classroom?
- 7.) Can you discuss discipline in your classroom and how it differs from your counterpart?
- 8.) What do the students feel about single-sex classrooms in comparison to what students feel about coed classrooms?
- 9.) Do you feel that the students are stigmatized because they are members of the single sex classroom?
- 10.) How do the children that do not have behavior problems respond to those who do?
- 11.) What is the student attendance like in the classroom? Is it steady? Are the same students frequently absent?
- 12.) Do the students complete their homework? What are the grades of the students like in the single sex classrooms in comparison to those in the coed classrooms?
- 13.) What is the behavior of the students like in the beginning of the school year in comparison to the end of the school year?
- 14.) How do the children in the single sex classrooms behave in the following years of their education? What is their behavior like?
- 15.) Does the previous question depend on the teacher and discipline styles that the teacher has?

- 16.) Do you feel that these classrooms in particular have a specific hidden curriculum?
- 17.) Why do you choose not to send your students to the RTC?
- 18.) How does your class respond to substitute teachers or other teachers in general - male and female?
- 19.) Have you received any special training to handle students with discipline problems?
- 20.) Could you provide a description about your life or childhood that helps you relate to these students?
- 21.) Overall, how do you view the students in your classroom?
- 22.) How do you establish respect with your students?

## Appendix D

### Student Interview Questions

- 1.) Did you decide to be in this all boy class? Do you like being in an all boy classroom?
- 2.) How do other students treat you that know you are in an all boy classroom?
- 3.) How is your classroom different from the all girls classroom?
- 4.) Do other teachers treat you differently than your teacher does?
- 5.) What do other teachers do when you misbehave?
- 6.) When girls misbehave, how are they treated?
- 7.) When boys misbehave how are they treated?
- 8.) When you misbehave in this class, what does your teacher do?

## Appendix E

### Vice Principal Interview Questions

- 1.) Why did this school decide to begin single gender classrooms and when did they come into existence?
- 2.) How are students chosen to be in the single gender classrooms?
- 3.) Are the single sex classrooms publicized in order to gain popularity?
- 4.) What are the school policies on discipline?
- 5.) What are your feelings concerning the RTC?
- 6.) What are the most prevalent discipline issues in this school?
- 7.) Who is disciplined more, males or females?
- 8.) What kinds of discipline do children receive?
- 9.) Can you describe the students in co-ed classrooms and in single sex classrooms, in terms of discipline?
- 10.) What happens to students when they return to co-ed classrooms after being in single sex classrooms? Do you see them having discipline problems again?
- 11.) Do you feel that the students are stigmatized because they are members of the all male classroom?
- 12.) What is the behavior of students like in the all male classroom in the beginning of the year in comparison to the end of the school year?