

From Sodomists to Citizens: Same-Sex Sexuality and the Progressive Era Washington State Reformatory

BRIAN STACK
Washington State University

IN 1911 AUTHORITIES IN SPOKANE, Washington, arrested eighteen-year-old Edward Doyle because he had “voluntarily submitted himself to carnal knowledge by one Frank Williams.” In response to police interrogation, Doyle admitted to having done this with a number of other men for at least two years and claimed that he always allowed men to perform acts on him and that he never performed the acts on anyone else. He cited the need for money and assured authorities that he “did not derive any pleasure from the act.” When it came time for sentencing, the judge, E. H. Sullivan, doubted Doyle’s claim that he was devoid of same-sex desire, but he also had faith that Doyle’s same-sex desires could be cured. Sullivan sent Doyle to serve his term at the Washington State Reformatory in Monroe, Washington, instead of the state penitentiary in Walla Walla, where men whose same-sex desires were deemed incorrigible were generally sent.¹

Three years later, George Chase, a businessman, sponsored Doyle for parole by offering him a job on a ranch in rural Grandview, Washington. Work there soon dried up, so Chase sought approval to send Doyle to Spokane to find steadier employment. This was a usual request within the state’s parole system, but it was met with opposition from the reformatory’s chief parole officer. In multiple letters to people involved in the case, Chief Parole Officer C. J. Webb expressed his belief that Doyle’s sexual problems arose from his exposure to urban environments: “It was distinctly understood that he should not go to a large city” and that “a year in the country would be the best thing for him.” Webb believed that Doyle was a “weak fellow” and that he would “fall again if he goes to Spokane.” This had no doubt something to do with Doyle’s first, failed attempt at parole

¹ Inmate 545, Corrections Department, Reformatory—Inmate Records, box 35, Washington State Archives, Olympia (hereafter cited as WSA). Sullivan sentenced Williams, the fifty-six-year-old transient man who performed the insertive act, to the state penitentiary.

in December 1912, which found him “sleeping with a bunch of hoboes in a Mission in the lower part of Seattle” and led to his reincarceration. Doyle, the parole officer insisted, would need to find work in a rural area if he wanted to remain on parole.²

Doyle was not the only young man convicted of a crime for engaging in same-sex sex in early twentieth-century Washington State who had his carceral experiences shaped by the prejudices of reformatory officials. Of the 134 men and boys incarcerated for sodomy or attempted sodomy in the state during these few years, twenty-two, or about 16 percent, spent time at the Washington State Reformatory, located in Monroe, Washington. Historians of sexuality such as Peter Boag, George Chauncey, and Nayan Shah have explored how government authorities in various American jurisdictions used sodomy laws to criminalize the same-sex sexual activities of young or immigrant men,³ but far less scholarly attention has been paid to state attempts to reform that same-sex sexual desire out of young men. This is especially true for those incarcerated at state reformatories.⁴

Washington State adopted a sodomy law in 1893 and reformed it in 1909. The 1893 legislation made it a felony to “commit the infamous and detestable crime against nature, either with mankind or any beast.”⁵ The 1909 law expanded the definition of sodomy by legislating that “every person who shall carnally know in any manner any animal or bird; or who shall carnally know any male or female person by the anus, or with the mouth or tongue; or who shall voluntarily submit to such carnal knowledge, or who shall attempt sexual intercourse with a dead body, shall be guilty of sodomy.”⁶ Both statutes made it illegal for men to engage in various kinds of nonprocreative sex with other people. The sodomy law was most often used to prosecute men who engaged in sex with other men, and it was also successfully used to prosecute men who had sex with young girls or animals, but I have uncovered no instances of the law being used to prosecute cases of necrophilia. Once the reformatory opened in 1908, sodomy convicts between the ages of sixteen and thirty who had not committed a previous felony—the criterion for any reformatory inmate—could be sent either there

² Inmate 545, Corrections Department, Reformatory—Inmate Records, box 35, WSA.

³ See, for example, Peter Boag, *Same-Sex Affairs: Constructing and Controlling Homosexuality in the Pacific Northwest* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003); George Chauncey, *Gay New York: Gender, Urban Culture, and the Making of the Gay Male World, 1890–1940* (New York: BasicBooks, 1994); Nayan Shah, *Stranger Intimacy: Contesting Race, Sexuality, and the Law in the North American West* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011).

⁴ See, for example, Regina Kunzel, *Criminal Intimacy: Prison and the Uneven History of Modern Sexuality* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008). Kunzel does look at state attempts to control and regulate sexual behavior, but not in state reformatories.

⁵ *Session Laws of the State of Washington, Session of 1893* (Olympia, WA: O. C. White, 1893), 470–71.

⁶ *Session Laws of the State of Washington, Eleventh Session, 1909* (Olympia, WA: E. L. Boardman, 1909), 950.

or to the penitentiary. Most sodomy convicts did not meet these restrictions on age and criminal history and were sent to the penitentiary. Of the men incarcerated for sodomy who were eligible for the state reformatory, only men who had engaged in sex with other men were sent to the reformatory, while those who chose to have sex with animals or young girls were punished more harshly with sentences in the state penitentiary.

During the early twentieth century, lawyers, judges, and the reformatory's officials and board of managers judged those who had committed crimes of sodomy not by attributing a permanent sexual identity to them but by viewing their sexual desires as behaviors that could be corrected. Legal judgments used a moral description such as "pervert," "degenerate," or "sodomist." The origin of the term "sodomist" is unclear, but it was frequently used by various Washington State authorities to describe men convicted of sodomy during the early twentieth century. Given the context of prevalent beliefs that same-sex desire could be cured, I take the "-ist" ending to connote a behavioral tendency rather than a permanent homosexual identity. The term "sodomist" was an adaptation of the more common "sodomite," which derived from the biblical story of the destruction of Sodom and thus referred to Christian condemnations of all nonreproductive sexual acts. This usage was unlike later understandings of sexuality that described those willing to engage in same-sex sex as having a fixed sexual identity. Use of this term is evidence for the primarily Christian underpinnings of the reformatory movement. Corwin Shank, the man responsible for founding the Washington State Reformatory, directly connected his Christianity with his desire to help youths.⁷ That the Washington State Reformatory employed a chaplain and mandated that inmates attend religious services demonstrates how Christianity and prison reform intersected at the institution. The term "sodomist" bridged legal and religious evaluations of men who committed sodomy crimes and left open the possibility that the personalities of those convicted of that crime could be reformed in ways that would make them unlikely to engage in future same-sex acts.

Despite the implication of Christian forgiveness, however, the conviction that sodomists could be reformed had its limits. Prosecutors in early twentieth-century Washington State applied differential judgments according to age, and older men were much more likely to be sent to the state penitentiary at Walla Walla, where they served half their minimum sentence before becoming eligible for parole. In contrast, about half of younger men were sent to the Washington State Reformatory in Monroe, a penal institution with a mandate reaching beyond punishment. Officials and the reformatory's supporters believed that separating young men from older criminals would save them by instilling good work habits and the values of citizenship. Along

⁷ Corwin S. Shank, *Four Score Years and One*, foreword by Martha Hardy (n.p.: n.d.), 47; Jack M. Holl and Roger A. Pederson, "The Washington State Reformatory at Monroe: A Progressive Ornament," *Pacific Northwest Quarterly* 67, no. 1 (1976): 21–28.

with those convicted of sodomy, the reformatory housed other individuals who had not previously been convicted of a felony and who, judges believed, were amenable to rehabilitation. As this article will detail, this reformist vision had sexual implications for those whose same-sex acts had landed them in the reformatory, since concerted efforts were made to rehabilitate them by changing their sexual desire.⁸ I will focus on the years between 1908 and 1920, an era for which detailed reformatory records have been preserved and that coincides with the 1909 revision to the state's sodomy law.

Washington State's reformatory officials, as well as the judges and prosecutors who sent men to the reformatory for violating the state sodomy law, did not view sodomy convicts as homosexuals, whose same-sex sexual desires indicated a permanent sexual identity. Despite the growing popularity of sexological and medical studies of homosexuality, these officials displayed little familiarity with contemporary texts that had begun to define homosexuality for an English-speaking audience, such as Charles Gilbert Chaddock's 1892 translation of Richard von Krafft-Ebing's *Psychopathia Sexualis* and American sexologist James Kiernan's 1892 article "Responsibility in Sexual Perversion," published in the *Chicago Medical Reporter*.⁹ As Regina Kunzel has noted, "Continental sexology was slow to appear in American studies of sexuality. . . . [I]ndeed, some seemed almost wholly unaware of the phenomenon of homosexuality, much less the new ways of conceptualizing [it]."¹⁰ None of the men sentenced to the reformatory for sodomy in Washington State before 1920 were ever described as homosexuals, and reformatory and legal officials preferred terms like "sex pervert" and "sodomist" when describing same-sex sexual desires. However, Washington State officials did express views about sexuality and masculinity that were the basis for the popularization of new theories about homosexuality in the United States. As Peter Boag has shown, degeneration theory greatly

⁸ Both male reformatories and institutions for reforming women were sex-segregated institutions that shared a focus on rehabilitation and industrial training at the turn of the twentieth century, but the focus on agriculture and masculinity was unique to the handling of male reformatory inmates. See Cheryl D. Hicks, "'Bright and Good Looking Colored Girl': Black Women's Sexuality and 'Harmful Intimacy' in Early-Twentieth-Century New York," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 18, no. 3 (2009): 443–46. Although historians of the American reformatory system have recognized that the institutions "reflected state-specific social, economic, political, cultural, and demographic contexts," few have given these contexts sustained analysis, and none have looked at how such contexts impacted the regulation of same-sex sexuality. Alexander Pisciotta, *Benevolent Repression: Social Control and the American Reformatory-Prison Movement* (New York: New York University Press, 1996), 154. Another major work on reformatories that does not address these contexts is Joseph P. Spillane, *Coxsackie: The Life and Death of Prison Reform* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2014).

⁹ Jonathan Ned Katz, *The Invention of Heterosexuality*, foreword by Gore Vidal (New York: Dutton, 1995), 20–23. On the popularity of such texts, see Peter Boag, *Redressing America's Frontier Past* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011), 165–67.

¹⁰ Kunzel, *Criminal Intimacy*, 55.

impacted turn-of-the-twentieth-century American sexologists' views about the causes of same-sex sexual desires.¹¹ Many American sexologists followed the teaching of George Beard, whose 1881 book, *American Nervousness: Its Causes and Consequences*, and 1884 book, *Sexual Neurasthenia*, detailed the "American disease" of neurasthenia. Beard explained that as a consequence of Americans' embrace of "modern civilization"—which he defined as including phenomena as varied as the invention of steam power and the increasingly public roles of women—the natural labor and gendered order was being overturned. Along with Beard, academic studies of crime and degeneration, like Eugene S. Talbot's 1899 book *Degeneracy*, which compared reformatory inmates incarcerated in New York and Illinois, promoted the idea that urbanization and modernization made Americans increasingly vulnerable to neurasthenic attacks.¹² It was thought that in its most extreme form, this neurasthenic attack led to nervous exhaustion, which made a man less masculine and more susceptible to inverted or homosexual sexual desire. When Washington State authorities regulated sodomy or attempted to rehabilitate sodomy convicts they did not directly cite Krafft-Ebing, Chaddock, Kiernan, or other sexological writings; perhaps they were simply unaware of this particular sexological discourse. But they drew upon the related ideas and language about degeneration and sexuality that influenced those sexologists when expressing their own views about how hardworking masculine temperaments ensured appropriate sexual desires.

Washington State carceral and legal authorities also did not describe same-sex sexual interest as something inborn; instead, they described it as something one could fall into through unhealthy and immoral habits. This was also a debate among turn-of-the-century sexologists, but again, it was one that criminologists often had alongside, not in conversation with, contemporary sexologists.¹³ Many sexologists, such as Havelock Ellis, clung to the notion that homosexuality was congenital while also recognizing that certain spaces, like prisons, made homosexual encounters more likely. When Washington State officials explained why a man was willing to engage in sodomy, they frequently pointed to the circumstances surrounding the act. Alcohol, in particular, was considered a dangerous influence because it made young men willing to engage in sodomy and corrupted the morals of young children. However, during this time Washington State authorities did not label the men who engaged in such activities as "sexual psychopaths," a term first popularized in the 1930s to describe homosexual men who preyed on children, nor did they express the belief that same-sex desires made one more likely to sexually abuse children. However much turn-of-the-century fears regarding the influence of older men on the sexual habits

¹¹ Boag, *Redressing*, 172–77.

¹² On fears about urbanization and homosexuality, see Boag, *Same-Sex Affairs*, 45–86; Boag, *Redressing*, 180; and Chauncey, *Gay New York*, 132–35.

¹³ Kunzel, *Criminal Intimacy*, 52–54.

of young people might appear to mimic later psychological conceptions of sexual psychopathy or predatory homosexuality, reformatory officials did not use the language of medicine and psychiatry in their adjudications of sodomy cases.¹⁴ They were instead more likely to directly invoke theories of juvenile delinquency exacerbated by modernization and alcohol—not incorrigible homosexual identity—to explain why men engaged in same-sex sexual activity. Their judgments about whether the young men sent to the reformatory for engaging in same-sex sex could become good citizens arose from their reactions to Progressive Era social evaluations of sexuality and their fears about the moral threat posed by urbanization.

Reformatory officials' ideas about good citizenship were essential to the institution's practices. While Margot Canaday's work on the history of immigration and military and welfare policy has demonstrated the importance of sexual mores in the creation of definitions of citizenship,¹⁵ I will argue that what she calls the "straight state" was also created at the state level through carceral institutions and sodomy statutes. For the men serving their sentence for a sodomy conviction at the Washington State Reformatory, questions about how they would become productive citizens started with local police forces, vice squads, and reformatory officials.

THE RISE OF THE REFORMATORY

During the Progressive Era the Washington State Reformatory was one of only four institutions of its kind west of the Mississippi, and it was the only male reformatory in the Pacific Northwest.¹⁶ This new, late nineteenth-century penal system, the adult male reformatory, combined numerous threads of reformist thinking. Sociologist Andrew Pesciotta has argued that it arose from the growing belief among American penal reformers that both the adult prison and the juvenile reform school had failed. Progressive Era penologists argued instead that what was needed was a third system, the adult male reformatory, which could reform young men who were too old for reform schools but who had not been wholly habituated into a life of criminality.¹⁷ This "new penology," as they called it, filled a gap in penal

¹⁴ On these later conceptions, see Marie-Amelie George, "The Harmless Psychopath: Legal Debates Promoting the Decriminalization of Sodomy in the United States," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 24, no. 2 (2015): 225–60; and Abram Lewis, "We Are Certain of Our Own Insanity: Antipsychiatry and the Gay Liberation Movement, 1968–1980," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 25, no. 1 (2016): 83–113.

¹⁵ Margot Canaday, *The Straight State: Sexuality and Citizenship in Twentieth Century America* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009).

¹⁶ Corrections Department, Reformatory—Inmate Records, WSA. Reformatory histories have not given substantial attention to activities at western institutions. Both Pesciotta, *Benevolent Repression*, and Spillane, *Coxsackie*, focus on the East.

¹⁷ Pesciotta, *Benevolent Repression*, 2–3; Kunzel, *Criminal Intimacy*, 15–19. On the transition from punishment as spectacle to bodily and spiritual control, see Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage Books, 1995).

policies that provided young people with education and vocational training while older people received only punishment and isolation. The first of these institutions, the Elmira Reformatory, opened in New York in 1876. Its supporters, including Elmira's first superintendent, Zebulon Brockway, who later became famous for his penal and parole reform initiatives, argued that the city's massive wave of new immigrants had contributed to increased crime and immorality in the city.¹⁸ They posited that the reformatory could employ corrective measures to teach immigrants the value of agricultural and manual labor, which would in turn make them into ideal citizens. By 1915 reformatories had opened in thirteen states and had become important sites for the development of penal policy and the production of knowledge about sexuality, criminality, and citizenship.

Penal reform efforts emerged at the same time as new theories of youth and childhood development. By the early twentieth century the term "adolescence" had been popularized in both public and scholarly circles by psychologists like G. Stanley Hall as a way to describe the teenage years of a young person's life, a period during which they needed appropriate guidance and moral influence in order to become well-adjusted adults.¹⁹ As historian Susan Pearson has argued, Progressive Era child welfare advocates believed that "environmental factors rather than parental immorality or irresponsibility" was what led young people astray.²⁰ For reformers like Corwin S. Shank, who believed in the malleability of young people's morals, a reformatory correctional institution was the natural place to create an environment promoting appropriate standards of citizenship.

The Washington State institution would have probably never been built were it not for Shank. Shank was a graduate of Yale University and a prominent Seattle lawyer who later became the first president of the reformatory's board of managers. While at Yale during the late nineteenth century he had spent several years studying the Elmira reformatory in New York, as well as other carceral institutions around the United States.²¹ Like other reformatory advocates, Shank argued that there existed two classes of offenders. The first class included youthful individuals whose criminal behavior was due to their upbringing and habits rather than to a criminal

¹⁸ On the founding of Elmira, see Pisciotta, *Benevolent Repression*, 7–13. On the impact of immigration and fears of corrupting young people, see Boag, *Same-Sex Affairs*, 45–48; and Linda Gordon, *Heroes of Their Own Lives: The Politics and History of Family Violence: Boston, 1880–1960* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2002), 28–29.

¹⁹ See Steven Mintz, *Huck's Raft: A History of American Childhood* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap, 2004), 186–87; and Don Romesburg, "The Tightrope of Normalcy: Homosexuality, Developmental Citizenship, and American Adolescence, 1890–1940," *Journal of Historical Sociology* 21, no. 4 (2008): 421–22.

²⁰ Susan Pearson, *The Rights of the Defenseless: Protecting Animals and Children in Gilded Age America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011), 189.

²¹ Frank F. Nalder, *The History of the Washington State Reformatory, 1896–1908* (Washington State Reformatory, 1913), 1–4.

nature; the other class consisted of more “hardened criminals” whose age and previous criminal history indicated no hope for reform. Shank claimed that it was impossible to reform youthful offenders incarcerated in state penitentiaries because they would be led astray by association with “professional criminals.”²² To solve this problem, reformatory advocates called for the creation of an institution to instill habits of hard work and “good” citizenship into young people who had transgressed the state’s laws.

Shank was unsuccessful in garnering support for the institution from Washington State’s governors until the election of Albert Mead in 1904. Mead supported many Progressive reforms such as tax and highway commissions and a wholesale update of the state’s criminal code, which was instituted in 1909 and which detailed the crimes that constituted sodomy by specifically including oral sex and sex with dead people.²³ He supported a proposal from Frank Jackson, a senator and the chairman of the Committee on the State Penitentiary, for a \$70,000 appropriation to create a new reformatory. Although legislators’ financial concerns cut that appropriation to \$30,000 before House Bill 176, An Act Creating the Washington State Reformatory, Providing for the Erection and Management Thereof and Making an Appropriation Therefor, was passed on 14 March 1907, Mead, Jackson, and Shank celebrated their success in making the construction of a reformatory possible.²⁴

Throughout the legislative process for establishing the reformatory, Shank, Mead, and Jackson cooperated in building public support for the idea that a new understanding of youth and boyhood should impact criminal and penal policy. In a 1907 report to Mead, Shank claimed that “the penal reformatory will separate . . . the misguided adolescent from the experienced criminal; the weak from the strong and cunning; the spirited boy from the perverted felon.” It would instill “good habits” such as “regularity, persistence, abstinence, [and] obedience” in addition to teaching inmates specific trades such as “barbering, book binding, blacksmithing, bricklaying, carpentry, frescoing, horse-shoeing, [and] painting.”²⁵ The final reformatory legislation, which became chapter 167 of the Session Laws of 1907, embodied these ideals. It provided for the hiring of a superintendent, physician, and chaplain to oversee inmates and required the appointment of a board of managers to manage the institution. Like other reformatory legislation around the country, chapter 167 mandated that only inmates

²² Nalder, , 3–4.

²³ For descriptions of Mead’s views, see Nicholas Jacob Ahlfs, “Albert E. Mead: Reform Governor of Washington, 1905–1909” (master’s thesis, University of Washington, 1969), 100–108; and Edmond S. Meany, *Governors of Washington: Territorial and State* (Seattle: Department of Printing, University of Washington, 1915), 95. The relevant section of the criminal code can be found in *Session Laws, 1909*, 890–1030.

²⁴ Nalder, *History*, 17–21. The text of the law can be found in *Sessions Laws of the State of Washington, Tenth Session* (Olympia, WA: C. W. Gorham Public Printer, 1907), 385–93.

²⁵ Nalder, *History*, 10–11.

who had not previously been convicted of a felony could serve sentences at the reformatory. State officials and penal reformers mandated indeterminate sentencing because they believed this could allow the reformatory's board of managers to decide when an inmate was fully reformed without needing to take an inmate's sentence into consideration. However, judges were still required to follow sentencing guidelines and hand down specific sentences in case the reformatory deemed a convict incapable of reform and sent him to the penitentiary. The law stated that the labor for building, manufacturing, and materials needed for enclosing and maintaining the institution "shall be performed by the inmates as far as practicable."²⁶ Following the legislation's approval, the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer* reprinted an excerpt of Jackson's speech to legislators, which encapsulated the ideas of the reformatory's advocates with the claim that "retributive punishment is a relic of barbarism."²⁷

Chapter 167 also stipulated that only males between the ages of sixteen and thirty could be housed in reformatories. Boys younger than sixteen were sent to the State Training School in Chehalis. There is little evidence to explain why thirty was chosen as the upper age limit, but policy mirrored age restrictions for reformatories in other states, including Elmira.²⁸ Fearing possible overcrowding, the reformatory's board of managers requested in July 1908 that Governor Albert Mead encourage courts to limit referrals to the reformatory to those between sixteen and twenty-one in order to focus on only those they believed most amenable to rehabilitation.²⁹ In practice, the oldest reformatory inmate convicted of sodomy in Washington State between 1908 and 1920 was twenty-eight, and the median age was twenty-two. Although these men were often a bit older than the board of managers had hoped, reformatory advocates assumed that a man released in his late twenties or early thirties would still demonstrate the benefits of a sentence at the reformatory by finding a wife, taking up regular work, and raising a family.

The reformatory was only imaginable because of late nineteenth-century legal reforms that established the need for a separate system of juvenile justice. The first juvenile court was established in Illinois in 1899, and by 1910 there were almost two dozen across the country, from Colorado to Missouri to Massachusetts. Female reformers such as Mrs. Homer M. Hill and the many unnamed members of the Seattle Federation of Clubs (the organization for club women in the city) had taken the initiative in this

²⁶ *Sessions Laws, Tenth Session*, 385–93.

²⁷ Nalder, *History*, 18.

²⁸ Katherine Bement Davis, "Law Breakers: Report to the Committee," in *Proceedings of the National Conference of Charities and Correction at the Thirty-Seventh Annual Session Held in the City of St. Louis Mo., May 19th to 26th 1910*, ed. Alexander Johnson (Fort Wayne, IN: Archer Printing Co., 1910), 32.

²⁹ Minutes of the Board of Managers, Washington State Reformatory, July 28, 1908, State Institutions Reformatory Minutes of the Parole Board, 1907–27, WSA.

development in Washington State, where they joined church organizations and the Sociological Society to successfully lobby the state legislature for the creation of a juvenile court in the city in 1904.³⁰ The basic idea supporting the juvenile court—that young people deserved a chance to prove that they could be reformed—echoed the calls of reformatory advocates and speaks to a widespread interest in social reform and youth welfare during the Progressive Era.³¹

Shank's letters reveal his belief that youthful individuals were the most capable of reform because they were not fully formed adults. When Shank wrote to Mead about his ideas for the reformatory and his hope that the institution would segregate the "misguided adolescent" from older, experienced criminals he echoed the emerging science of child development and the discourse of child welfare and juvenile court advocates who argued that young men at this stage of development were impressionable and malleable.³² Beginning in the 1880s, the Child Study movement produced multitudes of studies on children's linguistic, religious, physiological, and psychological development.³³ Members of this movement, including behavior psychologist John Watson, popularized the notion that humans went through distinct stages of psychological development and that adolescence was a crucial time for forming good habits. In his 1904 book, titled *Adolescence*, G. Stanley Hall, who became the foremost authority on child development in the United States at the time, introduced Americans to the importance of adolescence for the normal sexual development of a young man and argued that juvenile courts were important institutions for setting young people right.³⁴ In choosing to separate older and younger men while incarcerated, reformatory advocates like Shank were therefore connecting the state's carceral institutions to new scientific ideas about adolescence and popular social ideas about youthfulness and reform already at work in the state in the juvenile court system. The implication that older men were unlikely to be reformed was not a concern to reformatory advocates who were more focused on what could be done about problematic youths.

Mead repeated similar ideas in his private and public statements. In a 1906 letter inviting members to sit on a committee to look into the establishment of a reformatory, he wrote that the institution was for "that class of offenders who are too old for commitment to the State Reform School and yet are not hardened criminals." The intent was "punishment and reformation

³⁰ Marion B. Baxter, "About Plow Handles," *Seattle Daily Times*, January 31, 1904, 6; and "Woman's Power Is Unlimited: Dr. Matthews Says She Can Force a Civic Reform in Seattle," *Seattle Daily Times*, February 19, 1904, 7.

³¹ Elizabeth J. Clapp, *Mothers of All Children: Women Reformers and the Rise of Juvenile Courts in Progressive Era America* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1998), 77–78.

³² Corwin S. Shank to Albert Mead, quoted in Nalder, *History*, 9–10.

³³ Mintz, *Huck's Raft*, 189.

³⁴ Romesburg, "Tightrope of Normalcy," 425–27.

of those who have not been convicted of any previous crime.”³⁵ When Mead traveled to Monroe, Washington, in May 1906 he spoke at the city’s Commercial Club, whose members had made a bid for the reformatory to be located there. Mead stated that he was in favor of an institution “where the simply unfortunate youths could be separated from the criminal class” and, praising Monroe’s reformatory boosters in the audience, claimed that the “progressiveness of the town” made Monroe a logical location for the reformatory.³⁶ Like Shank and Jackson, Mead believed that the reformatory could serve a useful role by segregating young men who were capable of being reformed from the influence of more incorrigible criminals.

The final reformatory legislation called for the establishment of an institution on good farmland in Snohomish County;³⁷ the small town of Monroe submitted the winning bid, offering a tract of land one mile southwest of the town center. Shortly after the groundbreaking ceremony in October 1907, inmate labor was used to build furnished quarters for a superintendent, chaplain, physician, and chief engineer. State officials selected Snohomish County, just north of Seattle and on the more populated west side of the state, for financial reasons, since most inmates came from that region. Residents of Monroe celebrated the news, in part because of the economic benefits the institution would bring. Much like a bank teller counting up dollars at the end of the day, the Monroe newspaper added up the superintendent’s, chaplain’s, and guards’ families, who would “add directly one hundred to the population of the town.”³⁸ It also noted that the reformatory’s needs would be a boon for the clothing emporiums, butcher shops, drugstores, and post office already lining the city’s streets. The hard times that had persisted since a downturn in Monroe’s lumber industry would soon be relegated to “the memories of the pioneers of the stumps and mud period.” Locals also hopefully predicted that future appropriations for the new institution would result in increased government spending on everything from road improvements to the construction of a railway station.³⁹

Even as dollars danced in their heads, the people of Monroe also echoed the Progressive, reforming sentiments of state officials, seeing in their new institution a contribution to the broader public good. One 1907 editorial in the local paper, the *Monroe Monitor*, claimed that the reformatory would contribute to “the growth of Christian civilization.” The editors believed that “it is better for the unfortunate, and for society, to reform rather than to punish merely to punish” and that “many a respectable, and

³⁵ Albert Mead quoted in Nalder, *History*, 4–5.

³⁶ “The Governor’s Address,” *Monroe Monitor*, May 18, 1906, 1.

³⁷ *Sessions Laws, Tenth Session*, 385.

³⁸ “The State Reformatory,” *Monroe Monitor*, April 12, 1907, 2.

³⁹ “A Golden Opportunity,” *Monroe Monitor*, August 30, 1907, 2; “Nothing the Matter with Monroe,” *Monroe Monitor*, May 10, 1907, 1.

many a Christian home, will have a heart-breaking interest in the house of corrections supported by the state."⁴⁰ The faith of Monroe's citizens in the institution's potential for social regeneration and the rehabilitation of youth contrasted with fears in Walla Walla about how the new reformatory in Monroe would affect their city, home to the state penitentiary. Realizing that the reformable would no longer be coming their way, residents of Walla Walla protested that they would now only get "the worst criminals."⁴¹ These responses demonstrate that the correlation between youthfulness and reformability promoted by reformers had begun to influence the views of the broader public.

On 15 November 1907 inmates from the state penitentiary who would be the reformatory's first internees arrived to begin construction. Despite two escapes within the first month, which forced inmates to briefly halt their work on the main building in order to build a stockade, construction went smoothly. Inmates engaged in a variety of manual labor, from clearing land for irrigation and farming to making the bricks that would be the walls and foundation of the institution. Reformatory officials used these activities to teach inmates skills in construction and maintenance with the hope that their knowledge of skills like wiring, plumbing, and heating would make them productive and industrious citizens upon release.⁴² Over the next year, inmates worked eight hours a day to construct two buildings, inmate cells, a separate superintendent's residence, a power plant, walls, sewer and water systems, and a barn. In August 1908 the institution was ready to open.⁴³

The initial call for a state reformatory and public support for it was obviously not targeted exclusively at young men who had engaged in supposed sexual deviations but encompassed all youths accused of crimes. The initiative was part of a widespread academic, public, and private interest in how to deal with youths who violated state laws.⁴⁴ Steven Mintz has argued that the growth of child psychology, beginning with the late nineteenth-century Child Study movement, created a wealth of scientific data on youths that demonstrated the importance of setting them on the right path early in

⁴⁰ "The State Reformatory."

⁴¹ "Commercial Club Men Roast Solons," *Evening Statesman*, March 13, 1907, 1; "Godman's Effort Useless," *Evening Statesman*, February 26, 1907, 3.

⁴² *Second Annual Report of the Board of Managers of the Washington State Reformatory for the Year Ending September 30, 1908* (Olympia: E. L. Boardman, 1909), 14; Minutes of the Board of Managers, October 19, 1908, State Institutions Reformatory Minutes of the Parole Board, 1907–27, WSA.

⁴³ For descriptions of the construction and opening of the reformatory, see "Will Be Commenced," *Monroe Monitor*, September 13, 1907, 1; "Reformatory Banquet," *Monroe Monitor*, October 4, 1907, 1; "Reformatory Banquet," *Monroe Monitor*, October 11, 1907, 1; "Reformatory Committee Makes Financial Support," *Monroe Monitor*, October 18, 1907; "Reformatory Building Started," *Monroe Monitor*, November 29, 1907, 1; "Escape at Reformatory," *Monroe Monitor*, December 20, 1907, 1; "Another Escape," *Monroe Monitor*, December 27, 1907, 1; and *Second Annual Report of the Board of Managers*, 9–16.

⁴⁴ Mintz, *Huck's Raft*, 186–87.

life. Scientific literature arguing for distinct stages of human development promoted the idea that youths must be treated according to their different impressionable stages. Changes to the American economy that resulted in the growth of office work and the lessening of traditionally masculine forms of independent outdoor work left Americans anxious about how young men would grow into successful adults and made them receptive to the new ideas about adolescence most prominently articulated by G. Stanley Hall. Social welfare advocates and penal reformers saw in the reformatory the opportunity to merge ideas about the malleability of youths and the activities capable of reforming young criminals. The widespread support for the reformatory movement in both academic and public discourses did not directly mention how to deal with sodomy convicts, but in Washington State those men were subject to this new intellectual paradigm regarding youth, crime, and adolescence. The Progressive ideologies that led to the founding of this institution also enabled the surveillance, arrest, and incarceration of men, both young and old, who engaged in crimes of sodomy.

SODOMY LAW ENFORCEMENT AND THE WASHINGTON STATE REFORMATORY

The reformatory housed inmates convicted of a variety of offenses, but those serving sentences for sodomy in Washington State shared a similar demographic profile that did not substantially differ from those convicted of the crime in other parts of the American Pacific Northwest. Peter Boag's study of Portland reveals that "44 percent of those arrested for same-sex crimes between 1870 and 1921" were foreign-born white males.⁴⁵ For sodomy convictions in Washington State between 1877 and 1921, that number was 38.5 percent.⁴⁶ Only one of the twenty-two males sentenced to the state reformatory for sodomy or attempted sodomy during this period was living in the town in which he was born and raised when he was sentenced. Nine of these convicts (40.9 percent) were born outside of the country, and twenty-one had spent most of their lives outside of Washington State. As elsewhere in the Pacific Northwest, a majority of those punished for sodomy were working class. In addition to four laborers and three teamsters, there was a logger, a steeplejack worker, a truck driver, and an ironworker sentenced to the reformatory for sodomy or attempted sodomy during the early twentieth century. The average age was twenty-two years old, ten years younger than the average age of men sentenced to the state penitentiary for sodomy.

Age was also important to the regulation of sodomy in Washington State because it impacted whether or not an individual could be held responsible

⁴⁵ Boag, *Same-Sex Affairs*, 50. The average age of Washington State sodomy convicts was also the same as for similar charges in Portland.

⁴⁶ Corrections Department, Reformatory—Inmate Records, WSA; Corrections Department, Penitentiary—Inmate Records, WSA.

for a sexual act. Stephen Robertson has demonstrated that until the end of the nineteenth century American sodomy laws were primarily used to regulate and punish sexual violence. He argues that in the twentieth century, sodomy laws were increasingly used to regulate consensual same-sex adult sex acts. However, “a new emphasis on age, the product of the emergence of new ideas about childhood centered on physiological and psychological development,” created an atmosphere in which “the crime of sodomy continued to be primarily seen as a form of sexual violence.”⁴⁷ Nayan Shah has similarly explained that in the twentieth-century American West the regulation of sexuality hinged on ideas about age, sexuality, and consent. Sodomy laws relied on various age distinctions to determine statutory rape in cases involving women (fourteen to eighteen years old), whether an individual was a criminal accomplice (fourteen years old), or whether the individual was a legal adult (twenty-one years old).⁴⁸ Thus, sodomy cases involving individuals who were twenty-one or under, which included many of the cases at this time, first had to be adjudicated in terms of sexual violence. The men sentenced to the reformatory for sodomy crimes were above the age of being a criminal accomplice and liable for any sexual activities. Therefore, judges had to determine whether the accused in a sodomy case had engaged in a consensual act. Here, eighteen-year-old Ed Doyle’s experiences provide a useful example.⁴⁹ When Doyle was convicted of sodomy in 1911 for having sex with fifty-six-year-old Frank Williams, the police and judge in Doyle’s case believed that his willingness to sell sex for money made him responsible for his sexual act and deserving of a reformatory sentence, while Williams’s willingness to buy sex from Doyle landed him in the penitentiary. In other cases where sexual violence did occur or appears very likely to have occurred, the victim of the crime was not punished, and the sodomy convict’s age was only relevant if he was under the age of thirty and therefore eligible to be sentenced to the reformatory. Both young men who sexually assaulted children and young men who engaged in mutually consensual sexual relations were sentenced to the reformatory for having violated the state’s sodomy law.⁵⁰ At the reformatory, men convicted for sodomy offenses that involved sexual violence were almost twice as likely to be transferred to the penitentiary and deemed irreformable than were men

⁴⁷ Stephen Robertson, “Shifting the Scene of the Crime: Sodomy and the American History of Sexual Violence,” *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 19, no. 2 (2010): 239. On consent, see also Don Romesburg, “‘Wouldn’t a Boy Do?’: Placing Early Twentieth-Century Male Youth Sex Work into Histories of Sexuality,” *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 18, no. 3 (2018): 371–72.

⁴⁸ Shah, *Stranger Intimacy*, 133.

⁴⁹ Inmate 545, Corrections Department, Reformatory—Inmate Records, box 35, WSA.

⁵⁰ For an example of sexual violence, see the case of George McBride, convicted in 1915 of “sodomy by so called acts of sucking practiced upon small boys from five to twelve years old.” Inmate 1782, Corrections Department, Reformatory—Inmate Records, box 112, WSA.

sentenced for apparently consensual sexual acts, inasmuch as such a thing can be determined from historical records.⁵¹ Prosecutors and judges may have had high hopes for the reformatory's impact on predatory sexual desires, but in practice men convicted for predatory sexual offences frequently rebelled against the disciplinary measures of the reformatory. Reformatory officials reacted by deeming them unamenable to reformatory methods and transferred them to the penitentiary. Reformatory officials did not explicitly address this subject, but it appears from their handling of these inmates that the institution was better equipped to rehabilitate youths like Doyle, who had been seemingly corrupted by an older man, than it was to rehabilitate inmates who had preyed upon young children.

Race also played a factor in determining who was sent to the Washington State Reformatory. Washington State police officers caught white, Asian, Middle Eastern, and black men who were eligible for reformatory sentences engaging in sodomy crimes, but only white men were sentenced to the reformatory.⁵² These sentencing decisions—that white young men would be considered fit for reform, while young men of other races were considered unfit—thus appear to have been based on an unquestioned assumption of Washington State's reformatory and police officials. Even if judges and reformatory officials did not speak about race specifically, the institution still promoted ideals of citizenship unavailable to some nonwhites. Take, for example, the reformatory's belief that owning property was essential to becoming a productive citizen. In 1889 Washington State legislators responded to a public backlash against Asian immigration by passing an alien land law prohibiting noncitizens from owning land in the state. Although this law seemingly applied to all noncitizens, legislation denying citizenship to Asian immigrants on account of their race made property ownership a racialized category in this era,⁵³ a fact directly impacting the state's penal system. Washington State did not have an antimiscegenation law in this period, and thus interracial marriage was a legal possibility, but it was not widely practiced. Nayan Shah has shown that evaluations of the marriage, religious, and sexual practices of South Asians made by legal authorities in the twentieth-century American West "constrained" South Asians' "ability to be mobile, own property, and to claim national membership," frequently by contrasting what authorities perceived as immoral South Asian (often referred to as "Hindu") sex and marriage practices with normative "Christian

⁵¹ On this difficulty, see Romesburg, "Wouldn't a Boy Do?," 368–69; Boag, *Same-Sex Affairs*, 8–9; and Robertson, "Shifting the Scene," 229–30.

⁵² This assertion rests upon my collection and statistical evaluation of demographic data, including race and age, for all penitentiary and reformatory inmates in the following records: Corrections Department, Reformatory—Inmate Records, WSA; Corrections Department, Penitentiary—Inmate Records, WSA.

⁵³ Quintard Taylor, *The Forging of a Black Community: Seattle's Central District from 1870 through the Civil Rights Era* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1994), 107–9.

monogamy.”⁵⁴ Because a successful reformatory inmate was a citizen who sought out marriage, worked diligently, embraced Christianity, and could be expected to eventually own property, such beliefs about South Asians’ religious and sexual lives and their legal inability to own property or become citizens mediated against judges choosing to sentence them to the reformatory.

Prosecutors, judges, and reformatory officials debated the causes of sexual deviancy but most often came back to the issue of alcohol use. Historians have long noted the relationship between temperance reforms and the regulation of sexuality.⁵⁵ Indeed, it was often the policing of alcohol consumption that led to the discovery of sodomy crimes, and temperance movements influenced the laws that punished those engaging in same-sex sex. That many of those ensnared or at the very least endangered by sexual predators were young only contributed to the fear that alcohol was enticing young people into immoral sexual acts. In 1914 the Seattle Juvenile Court warned that “society doesn’t realize that the twenty and more boys who have been brought to this court this year for consorting with licentious ‘drunks’ . . . will tomorrow be less efficient citizens as a consequence.”⁵⁶ Such attitudes toward alcohol use had a significant impact on the kinds of men who came under state control for violating the sodomy law and how lawyers and judges viewed a convict’s fitness for reform.

In 1905 one temperance group attuned to such concerns, the Anti-Saloon League (ASL) of Washington, lambasted the state legislature in its publication, *Civic Progress*, for its “utter fear and disregard of all bills referring in any way to moral questions.” It further asserted that “any bill giving the people the right to protect their homes and children, the most important things in and for the state, created a stampede among the legislature.”⁵⁷ Another *Civic Progress* article, by William J. Herwig, voiced concerns about the protection of young boys from alcohol. Herwig argued that “the liquor dealers are willing to sacrifice everything—the tenderest affection for your son. They will snatch him from your very bosom; their sole aim is to create appetite” for alcohol. Herwig claimed that one in every 300 boys became “a tramp,” one in every 246 committed a crime, one in 17 lived a “life of

⁵⁴ Shah, *Stranger Intimacy*, 184.

⁵⁵ See, for example, Chauncey, *Gay New York*, 306–7; and Julio Capó Jr., *Welcome to Fairyland: Queer Miami before 1940* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2017), 237–38.

⁵⁶ “‘Court Methods, Mothers Pensions, and Community Dangers,’ in *Why Children Go Wrong*: Annual Report of the Seattle Juvenile Court for 1913 (Seattle, 1914),” in *Documenting Intimate Matters: Primary Sources for a History of Sexuality in America*, ed. Thomas A. Foster (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013), 102.

⁵⁷ “The Object Lesson of the Legislature of 1905,” *Civic Progress of the Northwest* 5 (May 1905), Manuscripts, Archives, and Special Collections, Washington State University Library, Pullman (hereafter cited as MASC).

vice,” and one in 13 became “a drunkard.”⁵⁸ With these arguments, the ASL convinced state legislators to pass a “local option” bill in 1909 allowing towns or counties to vote on being wet or dry. Even in cities that did not adopt a local option, prohibition advocates had some success in promoting alcohol regulations at the city level.

In 1908 future Seattle mayor George Cotterill, a member of the ASL, along with other Seattle temperance advocates, proposed an amendment to the Seattle city charter that would have limited the sale of alcohol to the city’s Tenderloin district and to one working-class area in the north. When it came time for Seattleites to vote in March 1908, they adopted the amendment with 11,739 votes in favor and 4,203 votes against.⁵⁹ The largest saloon patrol district (SPD) was located south of Yesler Way in an area already known for rioting, prostitution, and vice commonly referred to as Skid Road.⁶⁰ The large numbers of immigrant and transient men who made use of Skid Road’s cheap rents and amusements further fueled the fears of many native-born Seattleites about vice in the area.⁶¹ Although police were directed to focus on the sale of alcohol in these SPDs, they found themselves enforcing laws against other behaviors associated with the liquor trade. For example, in 1914 seven men, all working class, and four immigrants were convicted of sodomy in Seattle. For reasons that are not clear, only some of the arrest reports for these seven cases listed a specific location, but in the two cases where a location was listed, the incident had occurred within an SPD. Among the other five cases, three mention that the men were intoxicated before returning to their room, where they were caught engaging in sodomy. Given that the sale of liquor was limited to certain regions in Seattle, it is likely that these encounters had also begun in an SPD.⁶² As with the arrest reports, penitentiary and reformatory files concerning these cases varied widely in terms of the amount of detail included, some providing very little information. Nonetheless, the prevalence of cases within SPDs is an indication that police and other officials associated SPDs and alcohol use in general with other forms of vice.⁶³ Progressive reformers like the

⁵⁸ William J. Herwig, “The Boy and the Saloon,” *Civic Progress of the Northwest* 5 (May 1905), MASC.

⁵⁹ “Latest Election Figures,” *Seattle Daily Times*, March 4, 1908, 1.

⁶⁰ “City Notices,” *Seattle Daily Times*, February 15, 1908, 11; “Map of Seattle Showing Proposed Saloon Limits ca. 1902–1914,” cage 118, Homer Hill Papers, MASC; Murray Morgan, *Skid Road: An Informal Portrait of Seattle* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1982), 169–76.

⁶¹ Richard C. Berner, *Seattle 1900–1920: From Boomtown, Urban Turbulence, to Restoration* (Seattle: Charles Press, 1991), 62.

⁶² Inmates 7211, 7233, 7308, 7322, 7324, 7342, and 7430, Corrections Department, Penitentiary—Inmate Records, boxes 264, 266, 273, 274, 276, WSA.

⁶³ Seattle officials were not alone in these prejudices. As George Chauncey and Peter Boag have shown for New York and Portland, respectively, urban reform movements that did not target same-sex sex specifically still found ways to punish such activities through the regulation of a city’s spaces. Reform of a city’s parks and saloons could target those who used

ASL and Cotterill argued for an alcohol policing policy that they believed would naturally regulate vice by controlling the sale of alcohol. In the case of Seattle, the fact that SPDs were located in working-class communities populated with significant numbers of transient and immigrant men meant that these groups were disproportionately targeted for police control, and they experienced higher rates of arrest for sodomy offenses.⁶⁴

Not all cities and towns in Washington State followed Seattle in implementing an SPD regime, but a tendency to look for same-sex activity near where liquor was sold was nonetheless common and resulted in some men receiving reformatory sentences for sodomy offenses. Such was the case in 1909 when nineteen-year-old Earl Blake was caught receiving oral sex “in a building connected with a saloon” in Mount Vernon, Washington. In total, at least twelve of the twenty-two men and boys sent to the reformatory on a sodomy charge during the years of this study were arrested for encounters that involved alcohol.⁶⁵ While the police did discover acts of sodomy in other ways (some cases came to light because of spying neighbors or complaints from victims of sexual violence), alcohol consumption remained the most frequently mentioned factor in sodomy crimes.⁶⁶

That the prosecutor took the time to note that Earl Blake “was not intoxicated at the time” of his arrest near a saloon in Mount Vernon speaks to the assumptions of law enforcement and judicial officials about the connection between alcohol and sexual vice. Many defendants in sodomy and other types of cases referred to their alcohol use as an excuse for their crimes in an attempt to achieve leniency from judges. Judges and prosecutors similarly tended to believe that alcohol could be the cause of a man’s willingness to engage in illicit sexual activity. This can be seen in prosecuting attorney L. M. Burnett’s statement to the reformatory regarding twenty-three-year-old Thomas Golden, against whom he brought a successful sodomy charge in April 1913. Burnett blamed Golden’s previous “bad associations” with “drunkards” for his willingness to drink alcohol and to engage in same-sex sex, claiming that “if [Golden] can be stopped from drinking I believe he can become a good citizen.” Golden was sentenced to the state reformatory to learn how to avoid alcohol so that he would not be tempted to engage

those spaces to engage in same-sex sexual intimacies. Chauncey, *Gay New York*, 203–4; Boag, *Same-Sex Affairs*, 188.

⁶⁴ The foreign-born population of Seattle in 1910 was only 28.43 percent, but in 1914 they made up 57.1 percent of sodomy convictions. Norbert MacDonald, “Population Growth and Change in Seattle and Vancouver, 1880–1960,” *Pacific Historical Review* 39, no. 3 (1970): 310; Inmates 7211, 7233, 7308, 7322, 7324, 7342, and 7430, Corrections Department, Penitentiary—Inmate Records, boxes 264, 266, 273, 274, 276, WSA.

⁶⁵ For examples from Spokane, see Inmates 352, 353, and 354, Corrections Department, Reformatory—Inmate Records, box 24, WSA, and the corresponding penitentiary files; Inmates 6089, 6090, and 6091, Corrections Department, Penitentiary—Inmate Records, box 199, WSA; and Inmate 545, Corrections Department, Reformatory—Inmate Records, box 35, WSA.

⁶⁶ Inmate 154, Corrections Department, Reformatory—Inmate Records, box 10, WSA.

in such sexual activities. That Burnett believed Golden when he blamed his willingness to engage in same-sex sex on his drinking seemed to be what tipped the scales in favor of Burnett's recommendation that Golden serve time at the reformatory instead of the penitentiary.⁶⁷

While reformatory officials made the final decision about admitting an inmate into the reformatory, judges were the first to determine a convict's fitness for reform and had wide discretion to decide whether a convict would be sent to the penitentiary. Once the judge made that decision, the inmate had no recourse to appeal for a sentence at the Washington State Reformatory. Of course, judges and prosecutors did not always agree on what to do with a convict. In 1911 the prosecuting attorney for Kittitas County complained to reformatory officials that eighteen-year-old C. E. Frommel, against whom the attorney had won a conviction for sodomy, had not been sent to the penitentiary. "I was not in favor of sending a sodomist to the Reformatory," he wrote, "but a number of females who habitually preach to the prisoners in the jail prevailed on the Judge to send him to you." Who these women were is not clear, but it is possible that they were active in some local club interested in youth and criminality, such as the Seattle Federation of Clubs, which had lobbied for the creation of the Seattle Juvenile Court. What, exactly, about Frommel's case influenced the judge to sentence him to the reformatory does not appear in the records, but Frommel's claim that he "was drinking when [he] committed sodomy," his youth, and his transient history seemed to make him the perfect candidate for the reformatory's carceral measures. His frequent previous arrests for minor crimes around the Northwest signified that other punishments had not succeeded in rehabilitating him and that reformatory measures were needed before he committed crimes that landed him in the penitentiary.⁶⁸

Washington State reformers, lawyers, and judges relied on prevalent beliefs about youth, alcohol, race, criminality, and sexuality to determine how the sodomy law should be enforced and who would actually serve their sentence at the reformatory. Importantly, authorities until at least 1920 did not reference the language of increasingly popular sexological and medical books that described those who engaged in same-sex sex as having a permanent homosexual identity. Instead, these Progressive Era Washingtonians viewed same-sex sex and sodomy in terms of specific acts and moral character. Same-sex sexual desires were something that men could "fall into" if they were not steered in the right direction. Thus, these men were sexual perverts or sodomists, but they were still believed capable of reform and were thus not seen as victims of a permanent homosexual identity.

Reformatory officials in Washington State commonly explained sodomy as a criminal act by alluding to the difficult family life, transience, lack of fitness

⁶⁷ On the Oregon Social Hygiene Society, see Boag, *Same-Sex Affairs*, 189. See also Inmate 1130, Corrections Department, Reformatory—Inmate Records, box 67, WSA.

⁶⁸ Inmate 627, Corrections Department, Reformatory—Inmate Records, box 39, WSA.

for work, and mental weakness of the perpetrator.⁶⁹ They were drawing on their visits to institutions in other states, such as Elmira in New York and Mansfield in Ohio, and their reports allude in a general way to the scholarly literature on juvenile criminality without providing specific reference points to what they might have been reading. We can presume, however, that officials such as Frank Nalder and Corwin Shank would have been aware of works by W. Douglas Morrison and C. Bernaldo De Quirós, who described “the strong bonds of connection between drink and crime” and the perils of parents who negatively shaped youth’s moral development.⁷⁰ They were also aware of the ideas of Zebulon Brockway, the foremost reformatory advocate at the end of the nineteenth century, who described the development of delinquency as a combination of an individual’s own habits and tendencies along with societal pressures.⁷¹ Other works, like Eugene Talbot’s 1899 study of degeneracy among reformatory inmates, which found that “heredity defects” among inmates made them “fall ready victims to criminal tendencies and environment,” stressed the importance of providing to youthful offenders an environment where they could flourish.⁷² By choosing to send some sodomy convicts to the reformatory, Washington State’s Progressive Era judges and prosecutors were expressing their belief that those experiencing same-sex sexual desires could be changed if they had the benefit of this new carceral institution.

TURNING “SODOMISTS” INTO CITIZENS

The social concerns guiding the enforcement and prosecution of the state sodomy law followed these men into the walls of the reformatory and into their lives on parole. With a surveillance apparatus set up to convict men for engaging in same-sex acts, the reformatory superintendent and his thirty-six employees, made up of guards, industrial overseers, a physician, a chaplain, and a parole officer, worked to instill the kind of moral character in convicts that would prevent them from falling into old patterns of behavior upon release. Reformatory officers and the chaplain conducted their own evaluations of an inmate when he first arrived at the institution, but they also requested the judge and prosecuting attorney to provide them with a statement about a convict’s crime and the likelihood that he could

⁶⁹ Reformatory advocates most frequently mentioned that their travels to other institutions informed their thinking about corrections and Monroe. See Nalder, *History*, 1; Shank, *Four Score Years*, 49–51; and *Second Annual Report of the Board of Managers*, 16.

⁷⁰ W. Douglas Morrison, *Juvenile Offenders* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1915), 73; C. Bernaldo De Quirós, *Modern Theories of Criminality*, trans. Alfonso de Salvio (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1911), 197–99.

⁷¹ Zebulon Brockway, “The American Reformatory Prison System,” *American Journal of Sociology* 15, no. 4 (1910): 476–77.

⁷² Eugene S. Talbot, “A Study of the Stigmata of Degeneracy among the American Criminal Youth,” *Journal of the American Medical Association* 30, no. 5 (April 1898): 856.

be reformed. The prosecutor's evaluation of C. E. Frommel's fitness for reform remained in the reformatory's files on Frommel throughout his entire incarceration.⁷³ However, reformatory employees' evaluations of inmates were much more detailed than the statements of judges and prosecutors. Officers interviewed each inmate upon his arrival and recorded the results, which included demographic information, physical condition, smoking and alcohol habits, citizenship status, religious upbringing, marital status, work history, and descriptions of "marks, scars, deformities," and tattoos.⁷⁴ To determine how best to manage an inmate, the reformatory's officers and chaplain first needed to know his history, mind, and body.

The reformatory's first chaplain, the Reverend O. C. Wright, designed "all intellectual and moral, and to a considerable extent, the social life of the inmates."⁷⁵ The chaplain worked with the reformatory's director of education to design educational and social programs appropriate for inmates. He also met with inmates soon after they arrived at the institution and helped fill out Description of Convict and Prisoner's Preliminary Statement forms. By 1917 the chaplain was also tasked with producing his own document, a single-page Chaplain's Entrance Report. This form was divided into four sections—Early Environment and Social Organization, Moral Diagnosis, Treatment Recommended to the Individual for Personal Use, and Treatment Recommended to the Institution for the Individual—and shows the deep connection between varied Progressive Era social concerns and what reformatory officials believed they needed to know about a convict to ensure his reformation.⁷⁶ Take, for example, the report on twenty-year-old Arthur Anderson. In November 1918 Anderson was convicted of sodomy and sentenced to serve his time at the state reformatory. When he arrived, the chaplain at that time, P. H. Raymond, constructed a narrative of Anderson's life that focused on his family, work history, and social life. Raymond described Anderson's close living relatives: his mother, one brother, and two sisters, who all lived in his hometown of San Francisco. Raymond also noted that Anderson had left school at a young age because of trouble with his eyes. He ascribed Anderson's troubles to multiple factors: Anderson had supposedly "got in with some other fellows" after moving to Seattle and

⁷³ Inmate 627, Corrections Department, Reformatory—Inmate Records, box 39, WSA.

⁷⁴ The problems inherent in determining personal histories through these conversations were well known to state officials. See Frank F. Nalder, "The American State Reformatory with Special Reference to Its Educational Aspects," *University of California Publications in Education* 5, no. 3 (1920): 340–48; and Inmate 353, Corrections Department, Reformatory—Inmate Records, box 24, WSA.

⁷⁵ May B. Goldsmith, Anna Y. Reed, and J. A. Reed, *Report of Conditions at the State Training School and the State Reformatory Together with Recommendations for Needed Changes in Administration and Legislation* (Olympia: E. L. Boardman, 1911), 15. This 1911 investigation of abuse at the institution found no instances of wrongdoing.

⁷⁶ For an early entrance report, see Inmate 545, Corrections Department, Reformatory—Inmate Records, box 35, WSA. For a later report, see Inmate 2193, Corrections Department, Reformatory—Inmate Records, box 147, WSA.

had been drinking whiskey before committing his “crime.” Nevertheless, Raymond provided a fairly positive moral diagnosis, blaming Anderson’s troubles on having had “too much freedom” since his father died and noting that “his mother to whom he is very much attached sought to start him in the right way.” Anderson, the chaplain continues, has “good intentions” and “good senses” and was “very determined to right his wrong.” The only recommendation for treatment beyond the reformatory’s usual policies was that he should have “opportunity for school as his eyes will permit.”⁷⁷

Raymond’s report about nineteen-year-old Claude Joy, convicted of attempted sodomy in 1919, had a different tone but focused on many of the same concerns. He wrote that Joy was “not the most manageable” child and discussed his various stays in children’s correctional facilities. He detailed Joy’s family life and noted that prior to his conviction he had been making good money working with his father as a steel worker. In his moral diagnosis, the chaplain commented that Joy did not look healthy and that “open air life will help him.” While recognizing that Joy had “a good school career,” Raymond also speculated that Joy must have “some mental weakness somewhere.” This judgment was in line with prosecuting attorney Frater’s original assessment, which noted that although Joy could have been sent to an asylum, he should be given the opportunity of the “correcting measures employed at the reformatory.” The underlying assumption of both reports is that time in a reformatory could reform deviant sexuality—that instilling good habits and proper moral thought and action was enough to unmake sodomists by remaking them into law-abiding citizens.⁷⁸ Similar attitudes are apparent in the chaplain’s 1917 report on Ed Gakin, whose family had a failed homestead in Bend, Oregon, and who “never went to church or anything like it.” Raymond also prescribed “a little more English schooling” for Karl Brostrom, who, despite being born in the United States, had spent much of his early life in Sweden. Like the assessments of the judges and prosecutors whose judgments had landed these men in the reformatory, the Chaplain’s Entrance Reports revealed his beliefs about what constituted a potentially successful citizen: speaking English, abstaining from liquor, having a strong family, and developing a masculine character and good personal associations.⁷⁹

The class-based nature of what historians such as George Chauncey and E. Anthony Rotundo have described as the “masculinity crisis” provides insight into how these standards of American citizenship tacitly relied on

⁷⁷ Inmate 2416, Corrections Department, Reformatory—Inmate Records, box 165, WSA.

⁷⁸ Inmate 2599, Corrections Department, Reformatory—Inmate Records, box 178, WSA.

⁷⁹ Inmate 2193, Corrections Department, Reformatory—Inmate Records, box 147, WSA; Inmate 2332, Corrections Department, Reformatory—Inmate Records, box 159, WSA.

ideas about whiteness and class.⁸⁰ These historians have argued that at the turn of the century many middle-class Americans expressed fears about threats to the traditional gender order, citing the diminished manliness of middle-class men who gave up self-employment and working outdoors for desk jobs and the supposed danger that immigrants posed to white womanhood. Reformatory officials justified forcing inmates to embrace working-class, agricultural occupations with the argument that this labor created both masculine men and good citizens.⁸¹ These convictions permeated the procedures and evaluations of reformatory officials, and they were evident in the chaplain's use of job history, family property, religious devotion, and English ability to justify his judgments of an inmate's fitness for reform.

After evaluating an inmate on intake, officials set out to create a program of activities to help him learn to want to be a productive citizen. In 1920 Frank Nalder, who previously had served as the Washington State Reformatory's first director of education and had authored a short book on the institution's foundation, published a study through the University of California, "The American State Reformatory with Special Reference to Its Educational Aspects," that compared the practices of reformatories around the country. He explained the ideas about criminality, youthfulness, and reform that guided reformatory policies and praised or critiqued institutions for how well their activities aligned with such thinking. Nalder's report thus reveals how reformatory officers were thinking about youth, crime, and sexuality, which impacted the carceral and parole experiences of inmates convicted of sodomy. Following the reasoning of W. Douglas Morrison, who argued in a 1915 study of juvenile offenders that criminality in youths was exacerbated when their "defective physical capacity" prevented them from embracing industrial careers, Nalder considered physical and industrial training to be two of the most important aspects of reformatory policy.⁸² Echoing the beliefs of Zebulon Brockway, who claimed that "morbidity of body, mind, or the moral sense diminishes individual industrial efficiency and in turn narrows opportunity; leading on to indolence, privations, dissipation, and crimes," Nalder noted that "sound bodies constitute the foundation on which to build sound character and citizenship," and he argued that the success of the reformatories could literally be read in inmates' bodies.⁸³ An inmate's success in avoiding the temptation of same-sex sex

⁸⁰ Chauncey, *Gay New York*; and E. Anthony Rotundo, *American Manhood: Transformations in Masculinity from the Revolutionary to the Modern Era* (New York: Basic Books, 1993). For the argument that these fears were less a crisis and more a general anxiety about constantly changing gender norms, see Gail Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880–1917* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 11.

⁸¹ Nalder, "American State Reformatory," 423–25.

⁸² Morrison, *Juvenile Offenders*, 101–2.

⁸³ Brockway, "American Reformatory Prison System," 464; Nalder, "American State Reformatory," 388.

and in carrying out the duties of a good citizen indicated not only mental but also physiological fitness. Although the Washington State Reformatory did not have “systemic physical training” (according to Nalder, half of all reformatories were missing this requirement), it did offer military drills and outdoor playtime on Saturdays to build physical character. In training the inmates for industrial labor, officials believed that hard work would enable them to make “an honest living” upon release. This attitude is evident in the belief of the reformatory’s chief parole officer, Webb, that Ed Doyle’s “weak will” and tendency to “fall” into same-sex sexual encounters could best be cured through ranching work in a rural area.⁸⁴

The Washington State Reformatory made heavy use of inmate labor from its inception and continued to provide skills-based training throughout an inmate’s sentence. Inmates cut trees, made and laid bricks, ran electrical wiring, cooked, cleaned, and performed the other tasks necessary to build, maintain, and assist in running the institution. While not all tasks were typically masculine, teaching inmates how to cook and clean for themselves allowed them greater self-sufficiency upon release. Reformatory officials certainly realized the budgetary benefits of using inmate labor, but they also believed that this training imparted good habits to create good citizens. This connection between mental will and bodily activity was, according to Zebulon Brockway, a foundational component of the reformatory system, because he believed that “the bulk of prisoners consists of those who are weak, habitually wayward, and unreflective persons.”⁸⁵ An important way to give inmates a direction in life was through teaching them to embrace work and self-sufficiency. By applying reformatory policies to inmates convicted of sodomy, reformatory officers acted out the belief that such activities would make inmates no longer want to engage in the sexual habits that had led to their incarceration. For those officials, bodies free from the pollutants of tobacco and alcohol and built strongly through outdoor labor and an embrace of working-class professions were the kinds of bodies that avoided succumbing to immoral sexual desires.

Important to this process of mind-body reformation was the reformatory’s farm, a staple of all such institutions. These farms, Nalder argued, were “the means of proving to delinquent youths the attractiveness of agriculture as an occupation.” He believed that “if young delinquents were taught agriculture and induced to live in the country, much criminality would be overcome.” While reformers like Nalder recognized the problems of trying to “countrify” inmates who had spent most of their lives in urban areas, he still believed that “the farm offers a life and an environment which conduce to physical and moral health and subject their weak wills to a minimum of

⁸⁴ Nalder, “American State Reformatory,” 407–11; Inmate 545, Corrections Department, Reformatory—Inmate Records, box 35, WSA.

⁸⁵ Brockway, “American Reformatory Prison System,” 471–77.

strain.”⁸⁶ Those whose bodies had become weak from loafing and avoiding work would build strong wills through country living. The prescription of outdoor life as an antidote to weakened moral character reflected the prevailing belief within the parole program that masculinity could be formed through outdoor work and that urbanization had negative influences on health.⁸⁷ Such labor would remove the predilection for what reformatory superintendent Donald Olson called the “habit of Sodomy.”⁸⁸ Although reformatory inmate files rarely detail the exact activities each inmate performed each day, many sodomy convicts worked as ranchers, farmers, or other kinds of agricultural laborers when serving on parole. Given the high praise that they received while on the job, it is likely they had exercised those skills while incarcerated.⁸⁹ Convinced that alcohol was a cause of crime and that the negative influence of saloons and urban living needed to be countered, reformatory officials believed that country life could reform both the work and sexual habits of young men who had fallen victim to the temptations of same-sex sex.

Inmates’ progress through the industrial training program was judged through a three-tiered grading system. Each grade, identified by the color of its uniform, indicated an inmate’s progress toward earning parole. Those on the lowest tier were constantly reminded of how much more they would need to change in order to be considered for release, while those at the top were rewarded for their discipline with extra privileges. All inmates began in the lowest tier; they received a gray uniform and had their heads shaved—an experience that purposely distanced them from their former selves. Initially, inmates were also assigned to a room in a dormitory-style housing complex. Concerns over the continued occurrence of same-sex sex prompted reformatory officials in 1915 to implement a cell-block-style housing design, which, in the words of the superintendent, gave “a separate room to each of the men who are afflicted with the habit of Sodomy.” Over time, good behavior and work ethic were rewarded with a rise through the tiers: drab gray uniforms were replaced with a more colorful blue (for both the first and second tiers) and eventually with parole (for the first tier only). The colors reminded inmates of their place in the correctional process with constant comparisons to the successes and failures of others. Inmates in the third tier who continued to commit serious infractions or engage in sodomy could be sent to the penitentiary. When the reformatory’s board of managers sent Arthur Squire to the penitentiary in 1914, they only provided a

⁸⁶ Nalder, “American State Reformatory,” 421, 423.

⁸⁷ On the importance of masculinity and sexuality at this time, see Chauncey, *Gay New York*; Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization*; and Kevin P. Murphy, *Political Manhood: Red Bloods, Mollycoddles & the Politics of Progressive Era Reform* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008).

⁸⁸ Inmate 1457, Corrections Department, Penitentiary—Inmate Records, box 274, WSA.

⁸⁹ See the monthly parole reports for Karl Brostrom, Inmate 2332, Corrections Department, Reformatory—Inmate Records, box 159, WSA.

one-sentence justification: "Arthur Squire is a sodomist." When pressed for details a few months later, the reformatory's superintendent claimed that officials had come to this diagnosis because Squire continued to engage in same-sex sex while incarcerated, and they justified transferring him to Walla Walla with the argument that they currently did not have room to separate him from the other inmates.⁹⁰

Some of the disciplinary measures used for minor infractions were harsh; being caught smoking tobacco could be punished with solitary confinement and a bread-and-water diet, especially for repeat offenses.⁹¹ Inmates could receive longer sentences for refusing to attend church services. In fact, all infractions that did not knock an individual down a tier instead added additional days to an inmate's sentence, erasing any time earned for good behavior. But reformatory officials did eschew the brutal corporal punishment that characterized early reformatories such as Elmira.⁹² Instead, the system used at the Monroe reformatory combined solitary confinement with written citations that could add time to an inmate's sentence or knock him down a tier for rule violations. Nevertheless, some of the punishments meted out seem bizarrely harsh. In December 1910 Thomas Hogan received an additional five days added to his sentence "for having an excessive amount of toilet paper in his possession."⁹³

Between the military drills, which instilled physical training, the mandatory educational, vocational, and religious classes, which instilled moral training, and the farm work, which tied together these physical and mental exercises, the Washington State Reformatory—and other reformatories throughout the United States—worked hard to turn "sodomists" into productive citizens. And while many of these techniques did not specifically target those with same-sex sexual desires, it is important to keep in mind that the ideologies guiding them relied on ideas about appropriate masculinity and urban vice that had first led to the discovery of the same-sex acts for which the men were convicted. Country life, agriculture, hard work, soberness, and masculinity made good workers and citizens who had better "habits" than sodomy.⁹⁴

Of course, officials measured the success of their efforts not by counting how many inmates moved through the tiers but by assessing how the

⁹⁰ Washington State Board of Managers, *Seventh Biennial Report* (Olympia, WA: Frank M. Lamborn Public Printer, 1921), 386–87; Inmate 7324, Corrections Department, Penitentiary—Inmate Records, box 274, WSA; Inmate 1457, Corrections Department, Penitentiary—Inmate Records, box 274, WSA; Nalder, "American State Reformatory," 432–33. For inmates transferred to the penitentiary, see Inmate 352, Corrections Department, Reformatory—Inmate Records, box 24, WSA; Inmate 353, Corrections Department, Reformatory—Inmate Records, box 24, WSA.

⁹¹ Nalder, "American State Reformatory," 436.

⁹² Pisciotta, *Benevolent Repression*, 36–42.

⁹³ Inmate 352, Corrections Department, Reformatory—Inmate Records, box 24, WSA.

⁹⁴ Nalder, "American State Reformatory," 421–29.

inmates acted after release and on parole. For many reformatory inmates, parole meant that they would work for a number of months outside the institution before becoming eligible for final release. For inmates who were not American citizens, receiving parole triggered deportation proceedings by the Department of Labor. For this reason, federal officials relied on the state authorities for notification about sodomy convictions when denying citizenship rights and their myriad benefits to men who were arrested for same-sex sexual acts. Given the reformatory's insistence that inmates show themselves likely to be good American citizens if paroled, these deportations were a darkly ironic consequence of the creation of the "straight state."⁹⁵ Washington State officials worked to reform some young men into model citizens only to have the federal government ignore these efforts and hand down deportation orders.

A second irony was that deportation decisions depended as much on international politics as on the reformatory's pronouncements about an inmate's moral character. Concerns about immigration, transience, and nationalism spurred on by World War I came together in the arrest and deportation proceedings against Michael Epp, who had been convicted for sodomy in 1918 and sent to the state reformatory. Epp, originally from Austria, emigrated from London in 1914 and worked at the Davenport hotel in Spokane. He was convicted with the help of the testimony of Axel Hurst, a sixteen-year-old youth who had been caught having intercourse with Charles Martin and claimed to have done the same with Epp. Hurst and Martin had been caught after Martin's public criticism of the Red Cross and YMCA brought his homelessness to the attention of the police, who placed him under surveillance. Although he had applied to become a US citizen, Epp was soon subject to deportation proceedings. But the war intervened: in March 1919 immigration officials wrote to the superintendent of the Monroe reformatory with the news that Epp could not be deported "on account of conditions in Europe" and asked that he remain in the reformatory until further notice. In September 1920 the assistant secretary of labor reevaluated Epp's case and for unknown reasons dropped the deportation charges. The circumstances of world war having worked to his benefit, Epp was welcome to stay in the United States after the war concluded. It is possible that the assistant secretary was influenced by the positive reports about Epp's character. The secretary of the International Association of Hotel and Restaurant Employees, Epp's union, wrote letters expressing shock that someone of Epp's character could be convicted of a sodomy crime, and the reformatory's chaplain expressed his view that Epp was "heartily ashamed of his heinous offense" and that Epp appeared "thoroly [*sic*] penitent."⁹⁶ What happened to Epp after his incarceration and

⁹⁵ Canaday, *Straight State*, 21–25.

⁹⁶ Inmate 2401, Corrections Department, Reformatory—Inmate Records, box 164, WSA.

parole remains unclear, but his experiences with deportation proceedings show the varied influences shaping a sodomy inmate's parole experiences at the reformatory.

Other attempts at expatriating "sodomists" were much simpler, as in the case of Peter Koutris, deported to Greece in April 1914. Koutris was twenty-one when he was convicted in 1913 of sodomy with Frank Maple, identified in court records as somewhere between fifteen and seventeen years old. Despite support for Koutris among the local Greek community, he spent a year incarcerated at the reformatory learning how to become a good American citizen only to be deported to Greece in 1914.⁹⁷ This case demonstrates that for immigrants time spent in the reformatory was simply a form of punishment before deportation. This contradicted the stated goals of converting them into good (American) citizens. Cases like Epp's, where deportation could not be achieved, helped reformatory officials justify their focus on inculcating the virtues of citizenship in all inmates, citizens or otherwise, since the decision to deport could not be predetermined and was a federal prerogative.

For those not deported and for nonimmigrant men, parole required the successful navigation of yet another institution suffused with Progressive Era beliefs about citizenship, criminality, and masculinity. Like that of the reformatories, Washington State's parole system was based on the belief that hard work, steady employment, and good moral influences could keep young men from falling into sexual degeneracy. The parole system in Washington State allowed inmates from both the penitentiary and the reformatory to serve parole by working for an individual sponsor in the state. While the officials of both types of carceral institutions shared a belief in the association between work and moral rectitude, the reformatory was unique in requiring each parolee to report back to his parole officer every month by sending in a form. This form contained the parolee's earnings and expenses and his employer's comments on his work ethic and general character.⁹⁸ This practice served as the basis for what by 1920 would be sometimes referred to as the First Friend program, so called because it allowed an inmate freedom on parole if he was sponsored by a "first friend" capable of ensuring his success outside the reformatory's walls.⁹⁹

Parolees were "not permitted to drink intoxicants, smoke cigarettes, loaf, stay out at night, use profane or obscene language, visit saloons, billiards

⁹⁷ Inmate 1075, Corrections Department, Reformatory—Inmate Records, box 64, WSA. The other inmate identified as subject to deportation was George McBride, but information on his deportation case, including confirmation of his deportation to Canada, is sparse. It is possible that if he was sent to a medical facility for a time before deportation, as the prosecutor initially hoped, such information would not be publicly available. Inmate 1782, Corrections Department, Reformatory—Inmate Records, box 112, WSA.

⁹⁸ For an early monthly report, see Inmate 545, Corrections Department, Reformatory—Inmate Records, box 35, WSA. For a later report, see Inmate 2193, Corrections Department, Reformatory—Inmate Records, box 147, WSA.

⁹⁹ On the penitentiary's friend program, see Boag, *Same-Sex Affairs*, 200–201.

or pool rooms, associate with doubtful or objectionable company, [or] use any drugs.” Their monthly employment forms reminded them that they must be “obedient, respectful, truthful, and diligent” to their employers, that they must “correctly and politely answer all questions,” and that they needed to save money, avoid debt, and attend church services. Parolees were also forbidden to vote or correspond with other inmates from the institution.¹⁰⁰ This last point could be particularly important for inmates convicted of sexual crimes. Nalder feared that because reformatory inmates were “at that age when sex impulses were strongest,” such contact could lead to “filthy and lecherous communications of the lewd and perverted element,” in addition to “much masturbation, and some sodomy” for those with weak or intemperate characters.¹⁰¹ In calling on inmates to adhere to these and other guidelines, reformatory officials used the parole system to exercise their own social vision about good citizenship.

The conviction that sexual immorality pervaded city life was an essential aspect of the creation and enforcement of the parole proceedings surrounding the Washington State sodomy law and thus whom authorities labeled as good citizens. The law’s creators reflected prevailing fears about the moral decay of urban areas and ignored the existence of same-sex sexual subcultures in many rural areas at the turn of the twentieth century.¹⁰² This urban focus carried into the enforcement of the law as state officials concentrated their efforts on urban areas and particularly on transient working-class men. This is clear in the case not only of Edward Doyle but also of others like Claude Joy, for whom the reformatory chaplain recommended “open air life” as treatment.¹⁰³ The enforcement of the sodomy law and the reformatory policies enacted on the men convicted under it viewed same-sex sex as a desire that could be reformed out of individuals. In adopting this view, law enforcement, prosecutors, judges, and reformatory officials in Washington State embraced a kind of preidentarian view of same-sex sex. They assumed that the willingness of individuals to engage in illicit sexual activity could be altered and did not indicate a permanent sexual identity. From this perspective, sodomists had engaged in same-sex sexual activity due to immoral influences or lapses of judgment, not because of a permanent fixed desire for members of the same sex. Unlike the images of the pedophilic predatory homosexual that would be popularized in the homophobic propaganda of the 1920s and 1930s,¹⁰⁴ the reformatory system of the 1910s described convicts as having suffered from a lack of

¹⁰⁰ Inmate 545, Corrections Department, Reformatory—Inmate Records, box 35, WSA.

¹⁰¹ Nalder, “American State Reformatory,” 396.

¹⁰² See Boag, *Same-Sex Affairs*, 15–44; Shah, *Stranger Intimacy*, 63–67; and Colin R. Johnson, *Just Queer Folks: Gender and Sexuality in Rural America* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2013).

¹⁰³ Inmate 545, Corrections Department, Reformatory—Inmate Records, box 35, WSA; Inmate 2599, Corrections Department, Reformatory—Inmate Records, box 178, WSA.

¹⁰⁴ George, “Harmless Psychopath,” 232.

moral, social, and industrial training that would keep them out of trouble, not from a permanent psychological ailment.

While paroled, the men convicted of sodomy were forced to continually update their parole officers about their whereabouts, explaining how often they were working, detailing their income and expenditures, and reporting on whether they had been avoiding smoking and drinking. Although allowed some freedom, these men's lives were still very much controlled by the state. But few men were caught violating parole, and even fewer were incarcerated for doing so. When Arthur Anderson missed filing two parole reports, he brought his wife with him to his parole hearing to show that he was a good citizen. Anderson successfully argued that this opposite-sex marriage and his hard work on the road had prevented him from filing timely reports, and they provided evidence that he was no longer in the habit of engaging in same-sex sex. Throughout their time on parole, men convicted of sodomy were reminded that hard work, masculinity, and marriage were sure paths to good citizenship.¹⁰⁵ It is probable that authorities also gave Anderson some leeway because he had been serving his parole near San Francisco. Unlike Washington State's current parole system, which requires inmates to live and work in the state, in the early twentieth century, former inmates of the Washington State Reformatory could find work anywhere in the American West.¹⁰⁶ C. E. Frommel spent his time on parole as a laborer and coal dock foreman in Kootenai, Idaho.¹⁰⁷ Thomas Golding spent time trapping in Sandpoint, Idaho, before joining a baseball team in the same area. The chief parole officer had some initial misgivings about this, but he allowed Golding to continue to play, provided he found other work.¹⁰⁸ This was yet another reminder for Golding that his parole officer believed hard work and physical labor were the backbone of creating a good citizen and would distract from, if not remove entirely, any same-sex sexual desires.

The cases I have described highlight how an ideal of citizenship that emphasized productive work motivated the system of rehabilitation for men convicted of sodomy in Washington State at the turn of the twentieth century. Ideals of masculinity, work, family life, immigration, alcohol, sexuality, and citizenship were all factors in how the state determined the parole conditions for the men convicted of sodomy during this period. That some reformatory inmates were deported by the federal government after moving through this system reveals the limits of the reformatory's policies concerning noncitizens.

¹⁰⁵ Inmate 2416, Corrections Department, Reformatory—Inmate Records, box 48, WSA. On how this marriage ideal reinforced the power of whiteness and impacted Southeast Asian immigrants convicted of sodomy, see Shah, *Stranger Intimacy*, 85.

¹⁰⁶ "About Work Release," *Department of Corrections*, <http://doc.wa.gov/corrections/incarceration/work-release/default.htm>.

¹⁰⁷ Inmate 627, Corrections Department, Reformatory—Inmate Records, box 39, WSA.

¹⁰⁸ Inmate 1130, Corrections Department, Reformatory—Inmate Records, box 64, WSA.

It is impossible to determine whether the officials of Progressive Era reformatories succeeded in reducing sodomy crime or recidivism rates. Washington State's board of control believed that almost 80 percent of inmates who served time at Monroe made good on parole, but there is nothing in the records available at the Washington State Archives to verify this claim.¹⁰⁹ Few sodomy convicts from either the penitentiary or the reformatory were reincarcerated for engaging in illicit sexual activity, making it difficult to judge the reformatory's particular success at preventing recidivism. But regardless of the accuracy of reformatory officials' perceptions, they certainly expected to do better than the state penitentiary. After all, those who continued to cause significant problems while incarcerated—such as Thomas Hogan, George Jackson, and particularly Charles McCormack, who was convicted in 1911 for drunkenly “attempting to commit sodomy on a boy 20 or 21 years of age”—were sent to the state penitentiary to finish their sentence. These “worthless vagabonds,” the prosecutor insisted in his statement to the reformatory, had “no hope” for reform and were moved out of the reformatory system before being eligible for parole.¹¹⁰ The reformatory did not keep track of those convicts who were deported upon release, making it impossible to consider whether the state's training of good American citizens also made for good citizens outside the United States.

In the end, however, whether the Progressive Era Washington State reformatory system actually succeeded in reforming men “afflicted with the habit of Sodomy” was really irrelevant to how same-sex desires in youths were understood and regulated. Some, like Anderson, found a wife and declared themselves to be living successful lives after incarceration. Others, like Doyle, Koutris, and Epp, left no archival traces of their postreformatory lives. Even on the basis of the reformatory's own records, in other words, efforts to turn “sodomists” into citizens can only be described as achieving mixed success. However, for reformatory officials, these attempts to categorize, regulate, and eventually eradicate same-sex sexual desire in the men convicted of sodomy combined a sexual system that depicted illicit sexual acts as a form of immoral behavior (rather than as a permanent sexual identity) and a criminal and penal system that primarily concerned itself with controlling the lives and sexual activities of transient, working-class, young, and immigrant men.

Many of the ideas that provided the impetus for the Washington State Reformatory have lasted into the modern day. Likewise, the legality and morality of attempts to alter young people's sexual orientations—commonly called gay conversion therapy—are still a polarizing debate. In

¹⁰⁹ Pisciotta, *Benevolent Repression*, 140.

¹¹⁰ For Hogan, Jackson, and McCormack see Inmates 352, 353, and 354, Corrections Department, Reformatory—Inmate Records, box 24, WSA and the corresponding penitentiary files; Inmates 6089, 6090, and 6091, Corrections Department, Penitentiary—Inmate Records, box 199, WSA.

March 2018 Washington State outlawed gay conversion therapy by making it illegal for health care professionals to attempt to change an individual's sexual orientation. At the signing ceremony, Washington governor Jay Inslee connected the efforts to children's welfare by saying, "We are today prohibiting the abuse of our children."¹¹¹ Inslee's claim that attempting to remove homosexuality from youths is a form of child abuse stands in marked contrast to the activities of Progressive Era Washingtonians who supported the reformatory's efforts to rehabilitate young sodomy convicts. At the same time, some continue to support gay conversion therapy. The Texas Republican Party platform currently includes the following statement: "No laws or executive orders shall be imposed to limit or restrict access to sexual orientation change efforts for self-motivated youth and adults."¹¹² The whole notion of "curing" a youth's homosexuality remains a matter of contemporary political and social debate.

The public nature of the current debate contrasts with the historical case study I have presented. During the early years of the Monroe reformatory, Washington State officials worked out their social views about sexuality and society at the expense of the men convicted of sodomy. These activities were often removed from the public eye but in accordance with principles that conformed to prevailing prejudices. This was not because these officials had particularly strong social agendas about same-sex sexuality but because they represented Progressive Era ideologies that made up the fabric of the reformatory system. Inherent to this belief system was the conviction that hard work, physical health, and religious, moral, and educational instruction could prevent young men from becoming criminals. One of the more insidious effects of this belief was how it intersected with other social concerns of the period, particularly fears about alcohol consumption and urban vice, to label those who engaged in same-sex sex as unfit to be citizens.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

BRIAN STACK is a PhD candidate in the Department of History at Washington State University. His dissertation is an intellectual, legal, and cultural history of bestiality in the twentieth-century American West, focused on changing ideas of sexuality and animal abuse. His other work has examined sodomy laws, incarceration, LGBT community history, and the history of public universities and student activism.

¹¹¹ Rachel La Corte, "Washington Governor Signs Ban on Sexual-Orientation Conversion Therapy," *Seattle Times*, March 28, 2018, <https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/politics/gov-jay-inslee-signs-ban-on-sexual-orientation-conversion-therapy/>.

¹¹² Republican Party of Texas, "Report of the Permanent Committee on Platform and Resolutions as Amended and Adopted by the 2016 State Convention of the Republican Party of Texas," <https://www.texasgop.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/PERM-PLATFORM.pdf>.