This book was written during a time of growing upheaval and disagreement about how America should educate its students, particularly those who are poor, diverse, and failing school. Dominant educational research, newspapers, and popular movies such as “Waiting for Superman” continually fuel public debates about whether our 21st century schools provide justice for all, decrease the achievement gap, and leave no child behind. However, even though one of teachers’ greatest concerns and why many leave the profession, classroom discipline is rarely brought to the forefront of discussion. As a result, public discourse does not get into what actually happens during disciplinary moments that ultimately leads to the disproportional tracking of particular students into exclusionary school disciplinary consequences, which funnels an underclass of students into the school-to-prison pipeline. This book is a scholarly study, presented here as a readable story, and practical guide for walking teachers, administrators, and teacher education programs through the process of transforming traditional ways of thinking about classroom discipline and teaching in order to create student-centered, creative, non-punitive classrooms that authentically engage the most alienated and oppressed students in our schools and society.
Transforming the School-to-Prison Pipeline
EDUCATIONAL FUTURES
RETHINKING THEORY AND PRACTICE
Volume 61

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Transforming the School-to-Prison Pipeline

Lessons from the Classroom

Debra M. Pane and Tonette S. Rocco
Florida International University, USA
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In a recent TED.com talk, Bryan Stevenson, Director of Equal Justice Initiative, said to his audience whose primary interest was innovation, that “It’s that mind-heart connection that I believe compels us to not just be attentive to all the bright and dazzling things but also the dark and difficult things.” For educators, part of the “dark and difficult” is the huge growth of the school to prison pipeline and its impact on our marginalized students and on our society’s dream of becoming a real democracy. Another difficult part is the necessary admission by white women teachers that we live in a racist country, where we are the beneficiaries of power and privilege that have an adverse effect on citizens of color. Because approximately 84% of public school teachers are white and mostly female, our admission of unearned power and privilege is a crucial starting point if we are to engage in meaningful conversation about justice and equity. Debbie Pane and Tonette Rocco in Transforming the school-to-prison pipeline: Lessons from the classroom tackle these two national dilemmas for teachers and students.

Writing to teachers years ago, my late friend and mentor, Asa G. Hilliard, III, educator, psychologist, and historian, insisted that: “Revolution, not reform, is required to release the power of teaching. ... Virtually, all teachers possess tremendous power which can be released, given the proper exposure. We can’t get to that point by tinkering with a broken system. We must change our intellectual structures, definitions and assumptions; then we can release teacher power.”

We see intimations of Hilliard’s assertions in Pane’s work—a clarion call that seems vital if we ever hope to create schools worthy of our children and our teachers. As did Hilliard, the authors have meticulously questioned current belief systems that establish racism in schools; deliver authoritarian pedagogy; foster an obsession with student behavior in lieu of the pursuit of academic excellence; and institutionalize the blaming of students and parents for the consequences of demoralizing instruction. I believe Hilliard would have been pleased to read this work that openly challenges the arcane and dangerous “intellectual structures, definitions and assumptions” that prevail in schools, pushing our Black and Brown children into the sinister, corporate “school to prison pipe-line” and, by doing so, bankrupts our nation of the benefit of these young, untapped brilliant minds. This is a huge issue in Florida, since its school to prison pipeline as of 2013 is the largest in the nation. Another disturbing reality is that Black students are just 21 percent of Florida youth, but make up 46 percent of all school related referrals to law enforcement. So, in this text, the authors’ insistence on addressing institutionalized racism is crucial to any legitimate study of the pipeline or the demand for quality education for every mother’s child.
FOREWORD

Though Pane’s work wrestles specifically with disciplinary alternative school programs, many of the urban schools, where I observe and where my graduate students teach, carry the same stench of offensive and obsolete curriculum and pedagogy. Too many of these schools, in fact, operate like prisons, where students of color—especially those forced to live in poverty by an economic system that demands there be “losers”—are daily maligned and rigidly controlled as though they already wore orange jumpsuits. Because of this badgering of certain youth, I often think that the school to prison pipeline is in reality a prison to prison pipeline.

Affirming my experiences in public schools, Henry Giroux in his latest book, Youth in Revolt, asserts that the American public has become too easily swayed into “modeling schools after prisons, criminalizing the behavior of young people.”6 Furthermore, he contends that the results of this attack on youth have been catastrophic for them. “Not only do schools increasingly resemble the culture of prisons,” Giroux declares, “but young children are being arrested and subjected to court appearances for behaviors that can only be called trivial.”7 In Florida, even a 5 year old was handcuffed and arrested for a temper tantrum—a Black child, of course.8

But we should explore as well another facet of this assault on children in schools. The privatized prison system is one of the fastest growing industries in the nation.9 The industry, needs a continuous flow of prisoners into those jails to capture those public dollars; thus, enters the demand for criminalizing youth for the least infraction while also increasing detention of the immigrant poor in these prisons. The GEO Group and Corrections Corporation of America (CCA) are the two largest privatized prison companies, with profits per year of 3 billion dollars.10 Not only do these companies demean society by receiving such abundant profits for incarcerating people, they also have been discovered to drive local and national policy about immigration and criminal justice. Riding the waves of this corporate tsunami catching our poor children in its undertow are banks like Wells Fargo who hold significant equity shares in CCA.11 These shares further the national economic interest in pushing students out of school and into prison. It’s another case of “follow the money” and you find out who is driving the policy.

Aiding the corporations in dictating these policies, consciously or not, is the structure and pedagogy of “inner-city” schools. In these schools situated deep in the belly of most cities, the prime attribute desired for their marginalized students is obedience, not academic excellence. Obedience prepares them not just for prisons, but for the military and for low paying jobs. (Although, even work places like Yahoo, heretofore considered places where individual difference and creativity were honored, are now regimented to one-size-fits-all corporate policy, such as demanding that no one any longer works from home. Maybe corporate America is beginning to force conformity and strict obedience on all of its workers, not just those at the bottom of the economic scale.) In the schools where most poor children attend, scripted curricula and stupidly designed testing, all delivering multi-billion dollar profits to corporations, stifle the creative curiosity of our young children kicked to the curb by a society who doesn’t believe in them, nor care about them.
Hundreds of years ago, Great Britain created a colonial educational system to sustain its empire. And it worked extremely well to keep everyone in the proper place in a well-structured, hegemonic hierarchy. Teachers at the front doling out information, students sitting in rows powerless and obedient, sucking up filtered information that the elite chose for them. That system is still alive and well in many countries across the globe. The U.S. continues to use it; yet it most often colonizes only black, brown, and poor white students. And what better colony than a school-to-prison pipeline. All of these “dark and difficult things” that Bryan Stevenson challenges us to examine are up for discussion in this text.

Nevertheless, also in the text, Pane and Rocco devote a section to suggestions for student-centered, creative, non-punitive teaching. In another section, they describe “points of hope” that can interrupt the cycle of tyranny, mediocrity, and warehousing of young, imaginative students who daily suffer the slings and arrows of society’s outrageous failure to provide quality education to all of its children. I have been lucky to experience the hope that these authors suggest. Since 1997, I have visited and/or worked with the children that Bob Moses leads. I have met with them in Mississippi, in Boston, in New York City, in Los Angeles and in Miami. Many are the students whom this nation has ignored or punished.

Yet Moses’ youngsters personify Pane’s hope. They are part of the Algebra Project (AP), a program dreamed up, founded, and delivered by Moses (Civil Rights icon and MacArthur Genius Fellow) and his regional teams. AP takes the very same kinds of kids described in this book—alienated and underperforming—and serves up accelerated learning in mathematics, not remedial pabulum. Its primary interest is in the students’ intellect, not their “good behavior.” Contrary to traditional math content, AP’s curriculum changes as the need of the students change. AP teachers must learn how to quickly modify their plans for teaching tomorrow according to what was learned today. This kind of creative curriculum flies in the face of test-driven, standardized, static, regurgitated models in use most often today. Yet because of AP’s demand for creativity, not only students, but also their teachers begin to think more critically and imaginatively about their work.

For thirty years, in the Algebra Project classrooms, the progeny of slaves and sharecroppers and now children of new immigrants as well as youth from Appalachia have been offered the instruction typically reserved for what society deems “the gifted.” Steeped in an experiential, student centered pedagogy congruent with Pane’s philosophy, AP listens deeply and well to the voices of the youngsters they educate. And it raises those voices into the public sphere. Educators involved in AP in the various cities and towns around the country create opportunities for their students to talk about mathematics at national and state conferences, local school boards, college classrooms, community events.

Explaining the exigency for AP’s work, Moses insists that “The absence of math literacy in urban and rural communities is as urgent an issue today as the lack of registered voters was 40 years ago … solving the problem requires the same kind of community organizing that changed the South then. For, if we can succeed in bringing
all children to a level of math literacy so they can participate in today’s economy, that
would be a revolution.” In their text, the authors insist that transformations happen
without “waiting for superman.” Like them, AP isn’t waiting for society to clean
up its act; rather, AP continually finds the “crawl space” within and outside schools
to reach the students that society has chosen to leave behind or send to jail. AP is
grounded in a history of grass roots organizing that understands clearly that those
at the bottom must demand the education they deserve. Consequently, AP develops
students as a cohort, fostering a community with their teachers and their parents.

Another beacon for Pane’s hope is AP’s offspring, the Young People’s Project
(YPP), designed, run by and for young people. Co-directed by Maisha and Omo
Moses, it develops students into math literacy workers who go into their communities
during after-school hours to teach younger children that math is interesting, fun,
and doable. YPP uses the youth culture, its rhythms and rhymes, drums, hip-hop,
videography, youth participatory action research, math games, all as vehicles to
teach—and to extricate youngsters from the colonial vise that holds them tightly to
the bad education that gets them ready for prison.

In its sixteen year journey, YPP continually evolves as its prestige and local
power grows. Because of its openness to the organic nature of change and as a result
of grants awarded by the National Science Foundation, it has begun to develop
organizing skills of the young to challenge and influence public policy. These
youth are fulfilling Pane’s hope to authentically engage alienated students. YPP’s
capacity for authentic engagement that can shift quickly into the urgency of any
current event is illustrated best with their Finding our Folks campaign. Within weeks
after the debacle of Katrina, these disenfranchised youth began organizing students
and young adults from across the south to “Find our Folks.” Along with the New
Orleans Hot 8 Brass Band, YPP went to Atlanta, Baton Rouge, Jackson, Mobile,
New Orleans, and Houston to find the hurricane’s dispossessed. They networked
with community agencies, churches, schools, colleges, volunteers, friends in each
city who might support the tour and its work with dispersed populations. Their
vision for this tour, highlighted below, speaks to the demands for transformations
addressed in Pane’s book:

We seek to raise the voices of Katrina’s survivors and connect them with the
voices of America’s survivors, the brothers and sisters in all corners of the
country who remain on the margins of citizenship. We seek to use the tools
of education, documentation, healing, and organizing to explore and discuss
the conditions that led to the devastating impact of Katrina; to join the voices
of resistance, the veterans of past and continuing movements, with the voices
of Hip-Hop, Blues and Jazz; to celebrate African and indigenous cultures
as they have been expressed in New Orleans and throughout the world; to
find our folk, to reconnect the individuals, families and communities that are
scattered across the country, living in exile. In finding our folk, we hope to find
ourselves.
FOREWORD

What better antidote to oppressive models of education might we find than the above alternative to the school-to-prison pipeline—young people leading youth, using their imagination and skills, their art and music, invoking the wisdom of their elders, reaching back to all of the nation’s cultural roots, in order to lead America into a more just, equitable, and creative 21st century education. This is a paradigm shift, along with the one advocated by Pane, that I could easily wrap my brain around.

And does this shift need to also shake the foundations of College of Education? In their book, Pane and Rocco effectively challenge Colleges of Education (COE) to address these difficult issues of hegemony within their courses, and I, too, would like to challenge all COEs to investigate AP’s and YPP’s work; to invite the young into their “classroom management” courses to teach teachers how to liberate students from the archaic systems that enslave both teachers and children. Isn’t the very notion of “management” an antiquated concept, as Dan Pink insists, when talking to business owners who desire innovation? Drawing upon his behavioral science research on what motivates people to think new, Pink suggests that “management” is a tool for compliance and, thus, is contrary to autonomous, creative thinking and innovation—a premise solidly consistent with Pane’s contentions. If Pink is correct and if we want to engage youngsters in critical thinking, then we, as Pane indicates, must stop managing them and start delivering instruction that inspires them to create the new; that engages their intellects; that amplifies their voices. Or better still, maybe we simply get out of their way and allow them to learn how to act like citizens of a democracy, willing to grapple with the hard questions as well as attend to “all of the bright and dazzling things.” Teachers, then, might become inspirational guides, “living the question,” not giving the answers, and certainly not relegated as police meting out punishment in dreary urban “inner-city” schools.

But the question we must ask ourselves is—do we really want to inspire the progeny of slaves and sharecroppers, the children of recent Black and Brown immigrants, the children in Appalachia—or is our real desire to keep them in a system that will guarantee someone else will pick up our garbage, flip our burgers, dig in the bowels of our mines, pluck the feathers off our chickens, pick our tomatoes sprayed with poisons, and otherwise work for slave wages? Is that the hidden agenda of what we require for “other people’s children”?

NOTES

1 Stevenson, Bryan (2012). We need to talk about an injustice, TED.com, March. http://www.ted.com/talks/bryan_stevenson_we_need_to_talk_about_an_injustice.html
5 Ibid
FOREWORD

9 Ibid.
12 Ibid
PART 1

WHY NOW? WHY THIS?
This book was written during a time of growing upheaval and disagreement about how America should educate its students, particularly those who are poor, diverse, and failing school. Dominant educational research, newspapers, and popular movies such as “Waiting for Superman” continually fuel public debates about whether our 21st century schools provide social justice for all, decrease the achievement gap, and leave no child behind. However, reminiscent of most educational debates in our country’s history, even though one of teachers’ greatest concerns and why many leave the profession (Evertson & Weinstein, 2006; Metlife, Inc., 2006; Monroe, 2006; Public Agenda, 2004), classroom discipline is rarely brought to the forefront of discussion. As a result, public discourse does not get into what actually happens during disciplinary moments that ultimately leads to the disproportional tracking of particular students into exclusionary school disciplinary consequences, which funnels an underclass of students into the school-to-prison pipeline.

The school-to-prison pipeline represents the widely accepted process of disciplining a student, removing that student from the classroom as punishment, wondering at that student’s decreasing academic interest and skills, and watching that student flounder and eventually enter the judicial system. The pipeline provides a mental image of an existing trajectory that increases in disproportionality from the first time Black (and increasingly Latino) students get in trouble at school. These Black students are labeled as troublemakers and potentially dangerous after the first disciplinary incident. They become prime targets for teachers to refer to the office and for principals to suspend from school. Suspension gets students who disrupt classrooms out of the way. As Mr. Jenkins (one of the teacher participants from the study presented in this book) put it, “Where do we suspend students to?” He answered the question this way, “Suspension—it’s just anyplace but here.” Once suspended, the same students too often are expelled, get sent to juvenile incarceration facilities, get involved in school failure, drop out of school and ultimately end up in adult prison (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2008). See Figure 1 for a visual illustration of the school-to-prison pipeline.

The reiterative (unbreakable) school-to-prison pipeline cycle begins when a student gets in trouble in class and becomes known as a troublemaker and potentially dangerous. The cycle continues with:

- office (and school-related delinquency) referrals for disruptive behavior
- suspension
It is important to understand the concept of disproportionality to convey the magnitude of the problem. Disproportionality is determined by a 10% of the population standard. Therefore, a subpopulation is disproportionately under-represented or over-represented if its proportion in the target classification (e.g., suspension) exceeds its
representation in the population by 10% of that representation. Since Black students make up 16.9% of the student population in our nation, 10% of the population standard for disproportionate suspension would be less than 15.3% or more than 18.7%. The current 33.4% suspension rate of Black students is two to five times more than their White peers, which is well over 10% of the population standard, and confirms their disproportionate representation (Skiba, Michael, Nardo, & Peterson, 2000).

ENTERING THE PIPELINE: CLASSROOM DISCIPLINE

Entering the school-to-prison pipeline is influenced by classroom discipline. Some school discipline research suggests that the dropout problem may stem from favoritism or deep-seated prejudice in school discipline practices, beginning with teachers’ beliefs and actions in the classroom. In a major study, Skiba and colleagues (2000) collected the disciplinary records of 50,000 middle school students in a large urban Midwestern public school district. They wanted to explore possible explanations for “gender, race, and socioeconomic disparities in school discipline” (p. 1). Results indicated that Black students represented 66.1% of referrals to the office, 68.5% of suspensions, and 80.9% of expulsions, regardless of their being 56% of the student population. Black males represented 63%, 67.2%, and 83.7% of referrals, suspensions, and expulsions, respectively, and were 51.8% of the student population. However, no evidence supported the belief that Black students misbehaved more. On the contrary, they were referred for less serious reasons such as disrespect or excessive noise. White students were referred for more serious behaviors such as smoking and vandalism. No matter how the results were analyzed, significant racial disproportionality existed. Skiba and colleagues (2000) concluded that racial and gender disparity appeared to originate at the classroom level as “systematic and racial discrimination” (p. 16).

Other studies suggest a link between classroom bias and criminalization, race and privilege, and zero tolerance policies. Criminalization of Black males was first noticed in Rist’s (1970) longitudinal observational study of one group of Black children from kindergarten to second grade. He looked into the relationship between teacher expectations and student achievement. By the eighth day of school in kindergarten, the teacher had already divided the children into three ability groups and permanent seating assignments. She placed children who were well-dressed, clean, verbally interactive, and believed to be smarter at the table closest to her. She put children who were darker skinned, poorly dressed, and less clean further away from her. She also treated them more disrespectfully; eventually, they were also treated by each other the same way. Group assignments were repeated the following two years of school. This perpetuated what Rist (1970) refers to as a caste system of students’ academic achievement based on teacher’s expectations.

Since then, teachers’ beliefs and expectations of students continue to be a key factor in decision making in the classroom (Noguera, 2003, 2008). If teachers harbor
negative perceptions of Black students from the media, for example, they may be more likely to discipline Black students to keep control in the classroom. Teachers who misunderstand Black students’ cultural behaviors will also refer Black boys (in particular) more often to the office for misbehavior. By doing this, they unknowingly contribute to the discipline gap that exists between Black and White students (Gregory & Mosely, 2010; Monroe, 2006, 2009). It would help if teachers learned to shift their thinking from ‘Why can’t Black boys behave themselves?’ to ‘How can my teaching and classroom ecology support Black male success?’” (p. 105).

Race and class privilege is another reason for middle-class teachers’ and school leaders’ increased use of exclusionary discipline. This is especially true when they lack experience with diversity in their professional and personal circles (Monroe, 2005). Again, Black students are referred more often to the office for disrespect, disobedience, disorderly conduct, and fighting even when they were not intended as misbehaviors by the students (Skiba, 2001; Weinstein, Tomlinson-Clarke, & Curran, 2003, 2004). For example, cultural humor, play fighting, and overlapping speech were viewed as disrespectful or disorderly when in fact these are common ways Black students play with or play on words. They use repetition, dramatic flair, “creative use of word patterns, and an overall playfulness in language usage” (Irvine, 1990, p. 101) that traditionally-educated teachers may not have studied. Narrow views that are developed in community-based field experiences appear to perpetuate culturally irrelevant approaches to teaching, learning, and classroom discipline.

Race and privilege also influence school discipline policies and disproportionate punitive exclusionary discipline used on Black students in low-income communities (Fenning & Rose, 2007). Teachers often handled what they perceived to be discipline problems based on their belief that Black students do not fit the school norms because of their “race, academic problems, and SES [socioeconomic status]” (p. 537). Teachers believed that certain students are troublemakers and dangerous. Their perceptions were also augmented by federal mandates for all children to achieve specific academic standards. They feared they would lose control in the classroom and not be able to produce the expected results. In fact, school and classroom level discipline policies and procedures may exacerbate teachers’ beliefs that discipline is related to students’ outward characteristics.

Zero tolerance policies have been adopted by 94% of U. S. public schools. However, not one of the five panels of experts on school violence recommended zero tolerance or school security as a best practice in reducing violence (Hoffman, 2012; Skiba & Leone, 2001; Skiba et al., 2006). Instead, inequitable education policies, procedures, and practices result from student racial profiling with distressing disparities. Less attention is given to working effectively with families and communities. More attention is given to reducing classroom discipline and writing office referrals based on preconceived notions of misbehavior. When teachers fear the loss of control and the school uses heightened zero tolerance policies, power struggles increase and result in more classroom disruptions and suspensions. It is a vicious cycle. In a related study, Vavrus and Cole (2002) examined the social and cultural factors that
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influence teachers to make the decision to kick students out of class. The school had a large minority enrollment and stressed zero tolerance of violence policies. Two freshman high school science classrooms were studied to find out how disciplinary moments were negotiated. Disciplinary moments are classroom interactions that lead up to, occur before, or prevent exclusionary school discipline. Videorecorded observations, teacher and student interviews, and notes were analyzed.

Vavrus and Cole (2002) found that disciplinary moments varied in each classroom. Decisions made depended on how the teacher and students acted and reacted to each other minute by minute. Disciplinary moments were not the textbook-like series of events that are strictly defined in school discipline policy that presumes a link to violence. Instead, teachers often suspended students from class for unwritten or unspoken violations of classroom conduct codes after multiple disciplinary moments. They usually singled out and sent particular students out of the room when they felt a loss of control. This process did not usually link to violent behavior. Few other studies have examined classroom sociocultural interactions to understand how and why teachers use particular disciplinary actions. More classroom research is needed to understand and eliminate bias, suspensions, and expulsions, which lead to the disproportional discipline gap and school-to-prison pipeline (Osher, Bear, Sprague, & Doyle, 2010).

CAUGHT IN THE PIPELINE: UNQUESTIONED EXCLUSION

Students who are caught in the school-to-prison pipeline are disproportionately involved in disciplinary alternative schools and the juvenile justice system. Related legislation supports this unquestioned exclusion of Black youth in particular. The Delinquency Prevention through Alternative Education Initiative of 1974 was enacted by the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act (JJDP, 1974; Office of Justice Programs, 2008). This initiative provided the first separate alternative education facilities for antisocial youth. In the 1980s, the Office of Juvenile Justice Dropout Prevention (OJJDP) first promoted alternative education as a way to reduce youth crime. Since then, students in kindergarten through twelfth grade who exhibit antisocial behavior could be officially transferred to alternative education schools (Wolford, 2000). Antisocial behavior is defined as the recurring violation of social norms and routines through [perceived] disruptive, defiant, aggressive, or violent acts, such as fighting, substance abuse, and truancy (Van Acker, 2007). Between 1993 and 1998, the number of alternative education programs for antisocial youth rose from 2,606 to 3,850, a 47% increase. Today, 11,000 alternative education programs serve 612,000 students, 90% of whom are of middle and high school age (Foley & Pang, 2006; NCES, 2003).

The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB, 2002) was the first piece of legislation that required schools to reduce the achievement gap. This federal effort touches lightly on classroom behavior and discipline in reauthorized legislation that calls on comprehensive wrap-around (full) services to support youths’
academic progress, reintegration into the community, and prevention of antisocial behavior to prevent drug abuse and violence in and around schools (Cooper, 2005; The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 2004). Disciplinary alternative education and juvenile justice education programs often work in tandem to meet federal requirements regarding accountability, student achievement, social needs, and discipline (OJJDP, 2012; Van Acker, 2007).

Youth involved in these programs are usually transferred out of their regular school setting to “safe” alternative education settings. Many believe that these safe (dominant ideology for isolated) settings are better places to address youths’ academic, behavior, and discipline needs—and also to remove them from negative influences (Van Acker, 2007). However, some research indicates that youth who spend much of their school time in alternative education programs may develop failure-oriented and juvenile delinquent identities (Aronson, 1995; Foucault, 1977; Watts & Erevelles, 2004). Segregating youth who are at risk of academic failure and dropping out of school may also result in their alienation (Blanchett, 2006; Carver & Lewis, 2010; King, 2005; Nasir & Hand, 2006). Nonetheless, legislation and policies enforce the tracking, or sorting, of students in school according to their social and academic (usually reading or literacy) achievement or lack thereof (Fine, 1990, 1991; Oakes, 1985).

In our society, students in the successful track make good grades, get promoted regularly to the next grade, graduate from high school, attend college, and land better jobs (Oakes, Rogers, & Lipton, 2006). Students in the unsuccessful track make poor or failing grades, are not promoted regularly to the next grade, do not graduate from high school, do not attend college, and do not find good jobs (Blanchett, 2006; Nasir & Hand, 2006). Students on the failing track who are deemed antisocial are further penalized by being separated from their regular classrooms and schools into alternative education and juvenile justice settings (OJJDP, 2012). On the whole, society broadly accepts the achievement gap and discipline gap between successful and unsuccessful students (Carpenter, Ramirez, & Severn, 2006; Ladson-Billings, 2006).

A PICTURE OF BAD NEWS

The characteristics of youth who are caught in the school-to-prison pipeline paint a picture of bad news (OJP, 2008; OJJDP, 2012). The picture looks like this. They are disproportionately at-risk of academic failure and dropping out of school. They are three times more likely to live in poverty (Cash, 2004). Most are diagnosed disproportionately with behavior, learning, and reading disabilities (Blanchett, 2006). They are deemed disruptive or antisocial so have been suspended or expelled from traditional schools (Foley & Pang, 2006) at a disproportional rate, 56% are Black and 38% are Latino (Smink & Schargel, 2004).

Youth with disabilities attend alternative education programs in much higher proportions than their nondisabled peers (Van Acker, 2007). Those who display antisocial behavior have a significantly greater chance of being referred to alternative education programs and are at serious risk of relationship problems, dropping out
of school, and increased rates of arrest, incarceration, and recidivism, which means a relapse into crime. Overall, 13% of Black and 27.8% of Latino youth drop out permanently compared to 3.8% Whites (Snyder & Sickmund, 2006). National youth recidivism rates hover between 60% and 84%, and 57% of our country’s inmates 16 and over are high school dropouts with only basic literacy levels (Greenberg, Dunleavy, & Kutner, 2007). That means they read just well enough to function in society.

From the authors’ experience and research, this picture is skewed, hides students’ (and their teachers’) strengths, and offers no space for transformation. These young people have been put at risk and failed by the system. Too many have been historically racialized, marginalized, silenced, and segregated in schools and society (Fine, 1990, 1991; Weis & Fine, 2005; Gutiérrez, 2008; Kozol, 2005; Nasir & Hand, 2006; Oakes et al., 2006). Abundant descriptive statistics and consequential data help gauge the extent of disproportional and inequitable teaching and learning conditions and exclusionary school discipline outcomes, yet does not explain or transform them (Milner, 2006; Osher et al., 2010). Instead, our society continues to look the other way as youth are failed and penalized in the school-to-prison pipeline (Zion & Blanchett, 2011).

Disciplinary alternative schools for at-risk and disruptive students have been classified as Type I, II or III (Raywid, 1994). Type I are schools of choice. They do not apply here. TROY, where the lead researcher (of the study presented in this book) gained her initial experience, was a Type III school. It provided students with rehabilitation and remediation for possible return (i.e., reentry) to the traditional school system. TROY students had been through more expulsion and were more involved in incarceration than other students. The School, where this study took place, was a Type II program, which was the last option before expulsion. At The School, students had experienced less expulsion and had not been incarcerated as much as students in Type III programs at this point of their schooling. While at The School, students often sat in classroom suspension indoors (CSI) for the day after being kicked out of class while waiting to be sent home for a multiple-day out-of-school suspension. Written referral forms were required documentation per school district mandates for teachers to remove students from class. Blank referral forms were stacked in plain view on teachers’ desks, waiting to be used.

Overall, 39% of all U. S. public school districts have at least one disciplinary alternative program or school (NCES, 2003). Disciplinary alternative programs can be a separate facility where youth are transferred when they are suspended or expelled to a “school-within-a-school” (Cash, 2004, p. 165). They can be a disciplinary alternative (such as The School) or charter school for at-risk youth. They can be district-operated community-based schools or programs within juvenile detention centers (Foley & Pang, 2006). Of all district-wide disciplinary alternative programs or schools, 66% are in urban areas. Eighty percent are in southeastern United States. Ninety-five percent have over 10,000 students. Sixty-two percent have more than half minority enrollment. Forty-five percent take in student populations living in poverty.
Urban, suburban, and rural public school districts across the 50 states define alternative education differently, but approximately half of the youth referred to alternative education programs are unsuccessful in the mainstream school setting and persistently involved in drug or alcohol abuse, fighting, truancy, academic failure, possession or use of a weapon, and disruptive verbal behavior. Twenty-five percent are referred for teen pregnancy or mental health issues (NCES, 2003). Florida Department of Education, Bureau of Family, Community Outreach (2007) provides seven types of dropout prevention programs for a total of 1.8 million youth (OJJDP, 2012). Programs address teenage parent, disciplinary, and truancy issues. They offer educational alternatives, GED exit options, mentoring, and educational services. Florida Department of Juvenile Justice (FDJJ) programs operate under the Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services, providing prevention, intervention, detention, and treatment programs (Florida Department of Education [FDOE], 2006, 2007; FDJJ, 2007; OJJDP, 2012). According to these characteristics, The School was somewhere between a detention and intervention program for males with disciplinary issues.

Most disciplinary alternative programs, including The School, are site-based, have limited academic enhancement supports, use general and vocational education curriculum, and offer community activities (Van Acker, 2007). Disciplinary alternative education and juvenile justice education program effectiveness is determined by the use of best practices and instructional approaches (OJJDP, 2012). Best practices are determined by expert opinion, which indicates what works in successful disciplinary alternative education and juvenile justice settings. What works and best practices are often effective dropout prevention strategies (OJJDP, 2012). Small student-centered learning environments with career-training opportunities are considered effective. Cooperative, engaging curricula; caring, supportive teachers who provide a sense of community in the classroom; involvement with community members; and site-based management with strong teacher contribution also work well (Platt, Casey, & Faessel, 2006; Smink & Schargel, 2004).

None of these suggested effective best practices was apparent at The School. For instance, The School had culinary arts and auto mechanics electives going on during the study, but neither were student-centered learning environments as recommended. Student-centered culinary arts would have engaged students in researching recipes, collaborating on cooking methods, and discussing results for the purpose of improving future cooking products. Student-centered auto mechanics would have encouraged students to discover, collaborate, and come up with valid and safe options and solutions for repairing a faulty engine. The School’s garden area set aside for the horticulture elective was in disarray. Student-centered learning environments would have teams of teachers working alongside students to revitalize the defunct garden, using landscape design, mathematical, and science skills. Instead of engaging students in inquiry – and project-based learning, students were told where to go, what to do, and punished with suspension for bad behavior.
Evidence-based programs with a continuum of youth services may also offer effective instructional approaches, enhance accountability and public safety, and reduce recidivism (OJJDP, 2012). To be effective, reentry programming “must include a continuum of care that spans a wide array of critical needs including mental health, education, substance abuse, employment/vocational training, and family engagement and strengthening” (Children’s Law Center, 2011, p. 5). The School provided traditional school psychologist and guidance counseling services.

Some researchers suggest that effective instructional approaches for delinquent and antisocial youth should be nontraditional, motivational, immediately responsive, and understanding of social factors related to dropping out (Blomberg & Waldo, 2001). Active learning strategies which incorporate students’ learning styles and multiple intelligences into cooperative, positive interdependence, and project-based learning (similar to the culinary arts course in this study) seem to work well (Foster & Shirley, 2004). Few research studies explain how their results were reached or what approaches and strategies were accomplished. Statistics give us a clear report of the disproportionality of delinquent and antisocial students in low social and academic achievement (especially in reading), segregated classrooms and schools, and dropout rates (NCES, 2008). But how to eliminate these disproportionalities is not discussed in the literature.

We have had enough bad news in education and research over the years. Long-lasting change begins now with those who are involved in the situation. It begins by empowering all students and their teachers with practical ways to develop positive relationships in their own classroom and school. This book pursues the notion that we can eliminate oppressive ways of thinking, teaching, and learning that lead to anger, labeling, failure, suspension, and exclusion of students in classrooms and schools—and ultimately transform the school-to-prison pipeline.

TAKE AWAYS

Troublemaker: A student who gets in trouble in class and eventually thought of as potentially dangerous after the first incident.

Teacher Action or Counteraction: Discern, interpret, and transform your biases and prejudices about all students, particularly African American and Latino students. First, recognize and become aware of your own race, class, and privilege before responding to perceived disruptive behavior. Then, continually ask yourself what you can do as the teacher to engage each student before assuming that you have a troublemaker in your classroom.

Referral: A written incident report indicating a student’s classroom – or school-related (a) disruptive behavior and recommendation for his or her removal from class or school for a designated period of time (may vary by school district requirements) or (b) delinquent behavior and recommendation for his or her arrest.
Teacher Action or Counteraction: Get to know the facts about African American and Latino students’ overrepresentation in exclusionary school discipline, beginning with deep-seated prejudices in your own teachers’ beliefs and actions in the classroom. Then, commit to not being any student’s stepping stone into the school-to-prison pipeline.

Suspension: When a student is officially removed from class or sent home for up to 10 days (may vary by school district requirements) for classroom – or school-related disruptive behavior.

Teacher Action or Counteraction: Prevent student suspension by not writing any referrals for disruptive behavior. Instead, get to know and understand your students’ Discourses, including cultural behaviors and ways of using language (e.g., overlapping talk). Acknowledge and value these Discourses in your teaching practices by encouraging students to use and learn with them during class.

Expulsion: When a student is officially discharged from school for excessive school-related disruptive behavior or school-related delinquent behavior (may vary by school district requirements).

Teacher Action or Counteraction: Prevent expulsion by not partaking in zero tolerance and other exclusionary school discipline practices. Instead, get to know your students’ families’ and communities’ resources. Engage students in mapping their community resources. Visit these resources and invite family and community members into the classroom regularly to share their expertise and experiences with the classroom community of learners.

School Failure: When a student’s end of year school district issued report card reflects a failing grade point average (may vary by school district requirements), which disallows his or her progression to the next grade level.

Teacher Action or Counteraction: Prevent school failure by never singling out or isolating a student for perceived disruptive behavior. Instead, create a classroom community of learners who teach each other what they know and learn. Encourage this community of learners to problem solve issues that occur in – and outside-of-school.

Drop Out: When a student quits school before attaining a high school diploma.

Teacher Action or counteraction: Prevent dropping out by recognizing the impact of your teacher beliefs and actions about classroom discipline with your students, particularly African American and Latino students. Engage students in optimal learning, especially critical literacy, opportunities in heterogeneous collaborative groups rather than sorting them by ability and disability.

Juvenile Incarceration: When a youth under 18 years of age is sent to juvenile court and juvenile detention as a result of an arrest.
Teacher Action or Counteraction: Prevent student incarceration by committing to eliminate the discipline gap in your classroom. Recognize, value, and build on your students’ strengths in a classroom community of learners. Work alongside your students inside and outside the classroom in project-based service learning.

Adult Prison: When a youth under 18 years of age is direct-filed (skips juvenile incarceration) to adult court and adult prison due to the nature of his or her crime.

Teacher Action or Counteraction: Prevent the school-to-prison pipeline in your classroom, beginning with your beliefs and actions. First, commit to eliminating oppressive teacher practices that support students’ isolation. Co-construct student-centered experiential curriculum that empowers your students to work collaboratively with others. Share verbally and nonverbally with students how and why you believe in them and how and why you provide equitable academic and social learning opportunities for all students.

CRITICALLY REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS: DECONSTRUCTING AND RECONSTRUCTING THE SCHOOL-TO-PRISON PIPELINE

Critically reflective questions are provided to encourage teachers to deconstruct and reconstruct the school-to-prison pipeline, based on dominant ideology. This process will help teachers to discern unproductive teacher practices that contribute to the school-to-prison pipeline, create alternate interpretations, and create alternate strategies that move them to the development of authentic lived curricula and projects.

Discerning the School-to-Prison Pipeline:

1. How do teacher interpretations of student behavior based on dominant ideology contribute to the school-to-prison pipeline?
2. Describe a particularly troubling and recurrent student behavior in your classroom through dominant ideology.
3. Describe your teacher practices around this particular student behavior and how these practices contribute to the school-to-prison pipeline.
4. Explain how you could discern this same behavior in the future through a deconstructed and reconstructed view of the school-to-prison pipeline.

Interpreting the School-to-Prison Pipeline:

1. When and why do teacher interpretations of student behavior based on dominant ideology contribute to the school-to-prison pipeline?
2. Reflect on when and why your interpretation of a particular student behavior in your classroom contributed to the school-to-prison pipeline.
3. Explain how you could interpret this same behavior in the future with a deconstructed and reconstructed view of the school-to-prison pipeline.

*Transforming the School-to-Prison Pipeline:*

1. Describe how teachers’ alternate interpretations of student behavior may lead to alternate strategies and productive teacher practices, which transform the school-to-prison pipeline.

2. Think of a particular student misbehavior that occurs continually in your classroom. Now think of several alternate interpretations for this perceived misbehavior. How does discerning and developing alternate interpretations of perceived student misbehavior help transform the school-to-prison pipeline, beginning in your own classroom?

3. Reflect on a particular unproductive teacher practice you use around the previously mentioned perceived misbehavior. Describe an alternate strategy and productive teacher practice around this particular student behavior that will help transform the school-to-prison pipeline, beginning in your own classroom.

4. Based on your alternate interpretation of the perceived misbehavior in question, explain several alternate strategies that may move you toward authentic projects. Describe these authentic projects.
As a naïve White female from the South, I had silenced a subconscious curiosity about the segregation of my hometown high schools for years. But things were about to change. This curiosity was sparked and bubbled to the surface during a job interview with the Director of TROY, a public disciplinary alternative school for juvenile delinquents and truants. I had never heard of this type of public school even though I had spent my whole life in the public schools as either a student or teacher. The White female Director and I talked about the school’s students who had never gotten a real chance in life. She told me that most had never learned to read and needed a reading teacher. We realized after our talk that we were of kindred minds. We both believed that everyone could learn if given the chance and nurtured along the way, yet we never openly discussed race or privilege. Almost immediately, I accepted the challenge of becoming the school’s reading teacher, assuming that these students would be like any other student I had worked with up to that point. Also, I figured they would benefit from the theories and practices I had been taught during my master’s program. I was wrong.

When I began teaching at TROY, I had very little understanding of what that really meant. I only knew that the Director and I both believed in and loved young people who had never had a chance in life. This bond between us allowed me to thrive and flourish in a setting that I never knew existed.

I walked into the two run-down trailers posing as a school and was immediately shocked to discover that the students were all Black and (I thought at the time) acting wild. They were running in and out of classroom doors, talking loudly, talking at the same time, ignoring the teachers, and laughing at jokes I did not understand. It seemed like they did not see me. I felt invisible and White for the first time in my life. I had never known (or studied) about students like these or schools like this one. The pressing question in my mind became, “How do I teach these students anything at all, much less to read?” For awhile, I tried telling them what they needed to know, but my book knowledge was slowly relegated to the back burner.
A turning point occurred when I began assigning a daily two-page essay called “The Story of my Life.” The students moaned, “Does that mean the same title everyday? How can we write the same thing everyday?” I replied, “Isn’t this a new minute of your life right now? Couldn’t you write two pages about what happened last night as you talked with your friends?” I held firm. They balked. But they wrote. They slowly discovered and began openly telling me that writing their life story every day was important to them. I also found things out about their lives that I had no experience with and that teacher education courses didn’t cover. I never marked on their papers. Anything goes, I told them.

I felt a part of their lives and reflected on my own life through these papers. R. I. P. (rest in peace) was a common theme. Student authors often used their A. K. A. (also known as) from the street as their pen name. In all quotes below, A. K. A.s (i.e., pseudonyms) are used. For example, Subbers-4-Life wrote the following paragraph entitled “Rest in Peace!”

To a soldier that will never be forgotten. Katrinana, better known as Kay Kay, grew up in some projects, called Brown Sub. This young lady stayed to herself and never got into any altercations with anyone. She was very loving and caring. She died when she was 15 years old. She died of AIDS. She attended Brownsville Middle School, where she became an athlete. None of her friends knew she was sick until she had to be placed into the hospital where she later died. All of her memories can’t be hidden from anyone. I wish you were here to see how beautiful this world is. Rest in peace. Your soldiers are still going to war.

I read so many stories about my students’ friends and family members who suffered and died from AIDS or gunshots. It finally became understandable why students would sleep for a while one day or come in with a mad face covered in a hoodie another day, or why they were exuberant one day and totally lethargic another day. It always amazed me how deeply and emotionally they reflected on their struggles. Constant hope and love amidst frustration showed up in their writing as similes and metaphors. Pleading in writing to God, parents, or friends seemed therapeutic for them. For example, LaQueenie wrote the following short story entitled “My Dreams.”

My dreams are high so very high, singer, actress, writer, why. All my mom can do is question my life. The only thing I ask for is a chance to stay alive for as long as I have the strength to tell my mom I want to be heard. I don’t want to die. I want to tell her how I’m feeling deep inside. Life is short. No watch, no kind of time that tells me, “Angel, it’s time, float into my sky.” So please, dear God, just give me the chance to tell her my love before there’s no more. No more time to change the wrong into right, no more time to show the love I feel inside. Oh, God, please let me survive. I feel so dry and she’s the water that can help me stay alive. Sometimes I hate being here. People tell me not to fear, that my mom will always be right here. God, I’m so confused. Not knowing what
to do keeps on making me feel blue. I’m afraid I might not say the right words, or maybe act a certain way. God, please help me grow some strength. Please, please help me grow some strength. Please answer the pray that I hunger for each day. Oh, my dear God, let me express what I have locked in my heart. Only that chance to ask her, “Mom, please trust in me for once!!”

Students’ writings revealed their cognizance of life’s brevity, their desire to repair broken relationships, their voracious aspirations, and their urgent passion to be heard. I often wondered how they got up and even got to school at all! I came to realize these students’ strengths. Strength took on a new meaning for me that was quite different than I had previously believed. I had much to learn from young people who lived at the edge of a reality very different from my own. Students’ writing burst many of my misconceptions and blind spots—one of which was their knack for honestly assessing, critiquing, and demanding understanding of their situation in society. For instance, Tyama wrote the following poem entitled, “Don’t Give Up On Me.”

Don’t give up on me because I’m from the ghetto
I live in the ghetto
Don’t give up on me because of the color of my skin
I live in the ghetto
Don’t give up on me because I’m a teenager and mother
I live in the ghetto
Don’t give up on me because you have money and I don’t
I live in the ghetto

Tyama’s and many other students’ cries for help and mere visibility in the world changed my thinking and our classroom culture in many ways. Even though I was equipped with processes and theories from my recently received Master’s degree in Reading, I learned even more about teaching from the students themselves. The students at TROY taught me about the privilege of being White, about prejudice from their viewpoint. They taught me to understand that we each viewed and lived being White or Black differently. I learned that there is another side to every story. We never see that other side until we are immersed in it, though. Through my immersion with students at TROY, I became cognizant of my own privilege, which is based in dominant ideology. Growing up in the South, I had been socialized to distance myself, deny that there was another side to every story, and feel superior in my own little world where I belonged in order to justify my beliefs about education. There had been an unspoken and unacknowledged dynamic of power in my life. I had insisted on the norm as I saw it. I had bought into the myth that if you work hard enough, you will succeed socially and economically. To make sense of these newfound realizations, I began deconstructing and reconstructing my privileged, or
ethnocentric, viewpoint, which helped me learn to discern, interpret, and transform dominant ideology. It was a slow process, but after nine years of being with the students from TROY daily and all day long, my thinking began to change. I began to see that the rules of education had a double standard. And it was becoming clear to me that positive social identity, a sense of belonging, and empowerment was too often distributed and enjoyed according to one’s race, class, and gender. How could we transform the fact that good education was almost exclusively for Whites and ignorance was justified for Blacks? Our lives became entangled as we worked together to transform the oppressive environment at school inside of our own classroom.

Reflection After Years

I began to see that people of White and class privilege are never at the edge in this way; we are given things and places in life and hardly even notice. For years, I learned about these students’ lives from the stories they wrote about how it feels to be ignored, isolated, and swept under the rug (Robbins, 2009). I learned how when the dust under the rug collects so that it is noticeable, we sweep it into the dustpan and throw it away out of sight. It is not really gone, but out of sight. We isolate ourselves. When I reflect on what I learned from these students I shudder at what I did not know simply from being isolated most of my life from people who were different from me. I started learning from them about how the experience of isolation can make and also change a life and a culture in a classroom for the better. They knew the pain of isolation in a different way than I had known it. Together we began recovering what had been lost in our previous isolation from each other. We began integrating the realities of our current lived experiences. We began creating an authentic, lived curriculum together (Anyon, 1981, 2005). With this curriculum, they and I learned to go beyond taken-for-granted academic and social expectations for these students.

I asked the students daily, “What is important for y’all to do today?” Their answers to that simple question helped us create the curriculum. The curriculum was always overlapping, ongoing, and meaningful; it built on itself. One time, the students wrote baby books for one of the girls who was pregnant. We videoed each student reading their baby book after they had published them in the classroom. One of the girls used Love You Forever as her model. Her version of this book was tenderly applicable to the culture they all lived in and very closely adapted to the theme. Another time, the students determined that having a club that would collect and distribute food to feed people in their own community was important—because they had been hungry. Another time, they determined the stories that needed to be read were from their own history, so we held critical readings and discussions from literature such as Miseducation of the Negro by Carter G. Woodson in 1933. They determined which stories needed to be told in their student-published monthly classroom newspaper, which was delivered to the school, community, and beyond—because they lived by
these stories. They determined that a video about living with the killer HIV-AIDS needed to be made—because they lived with the killer HIV-AIDS. Reading took on a political connotation for us (Gee, 1992).

This was transformative literacy learning and education at its best. It was not geared around the mandated tests or classroom discipline issues, but around the lives of the students who started coming to school day after day, month after month, for the first time in their lives. During the nine years I spent as a teacher with these historically racialized (classified by race), invisible-to-much-of-society Black students, I tried to understand how they experienced isolation in this under-the-radar public disciplinary alternative school context, marginalized from mainstream schools and society (Pane & Salmon, 2009). However, just when I thought I had surely both learned it all and provided their main source of motivation, I experienced a jolt to my White identity when I interviewed three male students about their educational goals and realities for a doctoral-level qualitative research course. The results surprised me (Pane, 2005). I found out that I was still part of the problem and had more to learn!

Aside from calls made to students’ homes about failures to behave properly, follow classroom rules, and achieve in class, their families had minimal contact with schools and teachers. Basically, these students and their families had been ignored and isolated by schools and society. As their teacher, I discovered that I had also been guilty of not acknowledging their families. We privileged in the White middle – and upper-class never ask these students’ families what they think school should be like. And if we do ask, we do not listen. We still think we have the answers for everyone else’s education.

To my surprise, my students had family members who cared and encouraged them to try to succeed in school. I finally closed the door on society’s dominant ideology, based in conventional rules and assumptions about education (Geelan, 2005; Giroux, 2001, 2003, 2005; Kincheloe, 1991, 1993; McIntosh, 1989, 1997).

THE LONG AND LONELY ROAD

Right in front of me for nine years in a public disciplinary alternative school was a revolving door of Black students who had been expelled from their regular schools. They came into TROY and other schools like it, got expelled, came back in, and got expelled again. Not only that, they were usually involved in the juvenile justice system. Traditional White teaching practices, based in dominant ideology, and teachers’ gut reactions were not working for these students (Kemmis, 2008). Teachers relied on removing students out of the classroom—more commonly referred to as kicking students out of class—for what they thought were disruptive behaviors. With my eyes wide open, I realized I was interacting on a daily basis with Black students who had been excluded from society into an underclass. This was when I began to understand how knowledge was politically situated and how that affected what goes on in the classroom (Apple, 1996, 2000; Carlson & Apple, 1999).

These Black students had been separated into inner city, detention, disciplinary alternative, or second chance, schools. In my nine years of teaching these Black
students at TROY who were adjudicated, truant, and placed at-risk, it became apparent to me that they had been denied the rights of an equitable education and, thus, a humane life. Armed with the belief that there is no such thing as a non-learner and no good reason for educationally labeling a child, the desire to collate my experiences at TROY with others’ research about teaching and learning in similar settings became overwhelming.

In order to deal with the multiple educational contradictions that faced us, my students and I became engrossed in transforming ourselves and our classroom conditions by constructing ways of not kicking students out of class. The practice of kicking kids out of class and ultimately school, which academic literature calls exclusionary school discipline, was all around us; the phenomenon thrived (Meier & Wood, 2004; Rios, 1996; Woodson, 1933). However, conventional classroom discipline and assumptions, which support the dominant ideology that Black students are disruptive, culturally deficient, usually illiterate, and unable to learn to read, did not bode well with me. I did not believe this and I did not want my students to believe this about themselves either. No one else around me seemed to understand though. Surely, there were scholars out there who had come across these contradictions. My search began. Finally, through the overlapping ideas and writings of John Dewey (1910, 1915, 1916, 1938, 1939), Paulo Freire (1998, 2000, 2003), and bell hooks (1994), I began traveling down the long and lonely road toward transformation with my students.

Experiential Education for Freedom

Dewey’s notion of experiential education for freedom transformed my teaching practices with marginalized students. Dewey explains that experiential education for freedom cannot develop by pouring predetermined knowledge into students’ heads, a process also referred to as banking education. I resisted the dangers of banking education, which consist of transmitting volumes of information to students and denying them time for reflective thinking. These two practices result in miseducation, stunted intellectual growth, insensitivity, and lack of responsiveness—which my students could not afford. Instead, we participated in democracy, critically reflected on culture, and inquired about phenomena which have become taken for granted by most members of society. I chose educational experiences that would help create the kind of society that is desired in America (Westheimer, & Kahne, 2004). We did not dwell on drill and repetition since those practices decrease students’ capacity to act intelligently in new situations—something else my students could not afford.

I merged learning and experience for these students so that they could form attitudes at the time of learning that would determine what actions they took in future situations. For my students, school had previously been a waste of time since it did not connect at all with their out-of-school experiences. Dewey stressed that school should provide organic, natural connections between schools and the everyday lives of students. I used many examples from his writing about how to integrate students’ outside lives with what is learned in literature, art, history, and other classes. For
example, students created cultural artifacts (props), sets, and scripts for Drama Club presentations, based on their own local Black History.

**Dialogic Problem-Posing Pedagogy**

Freire’s dialogic problem-posing pedagogy for conscientization also transformed our classroom practices. Freire initiated conscientization successfully with marginalized peasants in Brazil. He explained that problem posing originates with students’ knowledge and that it is based on dialogue among the students and teacher as equals—something my students had never previously experienced. I used dialogic problem posing pedagogy to encourage the critical reflection of my students’ lived experiences (with what was being learned) for the purpose of “transform[ing] the world with their work and creating their own world” (Freire, 1985, p. 14). We exposed the myths of their historical condition—that of being locked up or expelled from school. They were caught in this cycle of punishment and school failure. We talked about why and what they wanted to do about it. We thought of ways to begin to change their condition (Greene, 1988). We also got some of their family members involved in things we were doing at school, such as holding a baby shower or shopping for material and creating costumes for one of the plays.

Dialogic problem posing pedagogy transformed my students’ silence about their own histories of oppressive educational conditions, specifically of being excluded from opportunities in mainstream schools and society into the school-to-prison pipeline (Wald & Losen, 2003). We continually discussed and reflected on the relationship between what they believed (their implicit theories) and their practice (how they acted). This type of dialogue integrates theory and practice—which Freire calls *praxis*—and leads to conscientization. Conscientization is a person’s realization that he or she is a creator of culture along with other humans (Shor & Freire, 1987). Conscientization enables transformative teaching and learning. As a transformative teacher, I was a cultural researcher or worker (Asante, 1988; Boykin, 1986; Delpit, 1995; Freire, 1997, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Madhubuti, 1994; Roth & Lee, 2007). I was empowered to practice Freireian educational theory of critical literacy and, in turn, could empower my students to name and reflect upon their world and then to remake their culture and to read the word and the world (Freire & Macedo, 1987). I believed and acted on the notion that public disciplinary alternative school students could be successful in school and, in turn, set out to empower them to do the same.

Other classes around us survived on dominant ideology, based in conventional views of learning and educational practices—specifically kicking kids out of class for disrupting class and/or not doing their class work, which involved demeaning curriculum comprised of things to read or compute that had nothing to do with their lives or needs. Unequal power relationships existed—the teachers and students did not get along at all. Classroom discipline was an ongoing prominent issue. In contrast, our classroom thrived on a reconceptualized view of learning and teaching reading, in particular, with a critical view of literacy (Beach, Green, Kamil, & Shanahan,
Power relationships and classroom discipline issues dropped dramatically as we prioritized problem posing and freedom to learn. We practiced Freirean-inspired critical literacy education by deeming illiteracy a consequence of unjust social processes. Illiteracy did not have to be! Since we considered reading a political act, everyone read to produce and discuss important ideas and questions that applied to real life. Each student learned not only to decipher written text (read words) but also to become empowered to read his or her world to make changes.

For us, critical literacy highlighted language as a tool to read the word and the world for social and political reconstruction rather than as a set of neutral, psychological skills for blaming students (Freire & Macedo, 1987; Giroux, 1987, 2005). Instead of distributing specific knowledge to the students for purposes of social control, I encouraged students to produce and transform meaning from their daily lived experiences (Bowles & Gintis, 1977). I encouraged students to name their world through their primary Discourses (i.e., capital designates ways of being; Gee, 1996); this meant that I had to listen carefully to learn their language and demeanors as they explained what and how they thought about and understood what we read or experienced. Then, we could begin making connections. Making connections between what they thought or how they understood what we were learning or doing introduced a dialectical relationship with the dominant Discourse, what was typically learned in school. This process transformed their silence from years of isolation and segregation in classrooms and schools to becoming a community of learners who openly discussed matters of importance and intellect (Gee, 1996; Giroux, 1994; Kincheloe, 2005; Pane, 2010).

Bell hooks’ work (1994) gave credence to my belief of the need to share a voice of love, understanding, compassion, and freedom in the classroom in order to engage and empower students. In her writings, bell hooks asked how else can we relieve the socially reinforced fragmentation of the haves and the have nots in education—which I saw first hand daily—except through heart and engagement of learners? This is a radical move that allows teachers to expand beyond rigid boundaries, to imagine and practice pedagogy that directly concerns interrogating the biases in curricula that purport systems of domination, such as racism, while “simultaneously providing new ways to teach diverse groups of students” (p. 10). Her work emphasizes that the pleasure of teaching is actually an act of resistance against the boredom and apathy that characterizes the majority of teachers’ and students’ feelings of their classroom experiences.

In the Deweyan and Freireian traditions, bell hooks shares strategies, not blueprints, for providing engaged pedagogy since each classroom is different. Strategies must constantly change and be reinvented to address the particular situation (hooks, 1994; Kohl, 1994). While teaching at the disciplinary alternative,
or second chance, school, I often wondered why people in the educational world spent so much time and energy excluding others. Trying to make sense of the endless fragmentation of classes, students, and schools and the demeaning and useless practices of remediation, suspension, and expulsion, I asked myself, “How is the act of kicking kids out of class beneficial for anyone?” Through hooks’ writings, I began to understand exclusion and racism as the result of an underlying power dilemma. She furthered my understanding of freedom in education or democracy in education through her story of how integration of schools changed the way she was taught. I had never realized how Black teachers taught their students. Or, for that matter, that there were Black teachers teaching their students. bell hooks (1994) wrote of her segregated education:

Almost all our teachers at Booker T. Washington were black women. They were committed to nurturing intellect so that we could become scholars, thinkers, and cultural workers – black folks who used our “minds” . . . . Within these segregated schools, black children who were deemed exceptional, gifted, were given special care. Teachers worked with and for us to ensure that we would fulfill our intellectual destiny and by so doing uplift the race. My teachers were on a mission. (p. 2)

Then to understand the extreme difference in educational missions, bell hooks (1994) wrote of her integrated experience:

School changed utterly with racial integration. Gone was the messianic zeal to transform our minds and beings that had characterized teachers and their pedagogical practices in our all-black schools. Knowledge was suddenly about information only. It had no relation to how one lived, behaved. It was no longer connected to antiracist struggle. Bussed to white schools, we soon learned that obedience, and not a zealous will to learn, was what was expected of us. When we entered racist, desegregated, white schools we left a world where teachers believed that to educate black children rightly would require a political commitment. Now, we were mainly taught by white teachers whose lessons reinforced racist stereotypes. For black children, education was no longer about the practice of freedom. Realizing this, I lost my love of school. (p. 3)

And so it has been since integration for many of our Black and other children who do not fit the stereotype of a good student—one with white skin.

I also learned from bell hooks that the lack of excitement we find in most classrooms is based on a fear of losing power. To me, this shed some light on the widespread use of exclusionary school discipline. She explains how excitement can, in fact, co-exist with intellectual and academic engagement, which I was happy to hear. However, I could see that too many teachers fear losing control the most when students are engaged in active participatory learning. They fear the freedom from traditional boundaries to address change, turmoil, struggles, mistakes, critical reflection, and reconceptualization of the space for learning, as bell hooks calls the
classroom. In fact, bell hooks writes that safety in the classroom does not necessarily mean silence on the student end; silence probably means lack of a feeling of safety or engagement.

A TRULY DEMOCRATIC CLASSROOM

A truly democratic classroom is a place where students and teachers feel responsible for contributing toward a common goal of critical (transformative) pedagogy—acting and reflecting on the world in order to change it (Wink, 2005). Our learning community must share the common desire to learn in order to live more fully in our world. I practiced developing this type of community in the classroom by always looking into each student’s eyes and speaking to them by name every time they walked in the door and by listening to hear and make every voice heard. I rejected the concept of a banking system of education where students are regarded as passive bystanders with their hands out and opted instead for transformative pedagogy, rooted in critical multiculturalism (Banks, 2001; Banks et al., 2005; Kincheloe & Steinberg, 2002). In a critical multicultural classroom community, no one can be invisible. Thinking even becomes visible.

Sharing and hearing everyone’s ideas in a learning community does not look or sound like methodically planned lessons. It means that we give up old ways of thinking, learning, and teaching to integrate theory and practice (praxis). In the social reality of the public disciplinary alternative school classroom, it was hard work to develop freedom in education with students. I had to spend time studying transformative praxis before understanding the importance of critically reflecting on what was happening in the classroom—in order to allow conscientization and praxis (i.e., freedom in education) to coexist. Over the years, I theorized and developed anti-racist teaching and learning practices that [according to bell hooks] enabled me to remember, recover, renew, and actively struggle in the fight for freedom in education and inclusion of all my students. I wanted my students to be involved in the fight for working hard for something radically important, and to know that it was not easy. Based on my experiences and guidance from Dewey, Freire, and hooks, I reconceptualized the space for learning and sought out transformative teaching and learning practices, or transformative literacy praxis, to engage students in and increase their critical literacy instead of kicking kids out of class. I began wondering about what happens (and why) in other classrooms when teachers are faced with the choice of whether to use or not use exclusionary discipline. I wondered what teachers and students were thinking.

FROM THAT POINT FORWARD

From that point forward, I carried empathy with me for students who experienced savage inequities, based on derogatory labels given them, at school every day. I had become aware of my Whiteness and more sensitive to the world my Black students lived in—which markedly changed my beliefs about education in general.
and Black students’ abilities and behaviors in particular. I was in the process of deconstructing and reconstructing my privileged, or ethnocentric, viewpoint, based on dominant ideology, which enabled me to discern unproductive student behavior, create alternate interpretations, and create alternate strategies that moved me to the development of authentic lived curricula and projects. This process transformed my practice. Most teachers conventionally believe the dominant ideology that classroom discipline and learning are what students are able or not able to do correctly, based on some predetermined standard. Most likely, these same teachers also view discipline and learning problems as what they must deal with when their planned lesson gets interrupted. In contrast, a handful of teachers, including myself, have a transformative mindset, which allows us believe that classroom discipline and learning result from how teachers and students get along minute by minute. We view negotiation and problem solving as typical and necessary parts of daily classroom life for real learning to occur. In fact, we very rarely use exclusionary school discipline! I had become so concerned with this gap in teachers’ ideologies that I set out to conduct a study interrogating teacher practices around exclusionary school discipline.

Note: At this point, we feel we should explain the role of the second author. The book is based on the research and experience of Debbie. Tonette has acted as Debbie’s advisor, mentor, and friend through Debbie’s journey collecting and analyzing the data and working on this book. Tonette has read and critiqued every word, and the book’s structure and tone have changed dramatically since Tonette joined the project as a co-author guiding Debbie through the process of clarifying her thoughts about this important topic.

**TAKE AWAYS**

Critical Reflection: A reiterative three-pronged process, involving discernment, interpretation, and transformation of one’s biases and prejudices. First, continually (discern) listen to and learn about your students’ lives and how they feel about their experiences inside and outside of school from the stories they tell (write or act out). Second, continually (interpret) reflect on and compare how what you learn from your students differs from your own experiences inside and outside of school and how you feel about those experiences. Third, continually (transform) merge what you learn from your students with your evolving teacher theories and practices (praxis) to change and also create a new life and culture in your classroom and outside of school for (social justice) the better of society.

Teacher Action or Counteraction: Teach your students to use the process of critical reflection for the purpose of co-constructing transformative literacy (i.e., reading, writing, listening, speaking, viewing, researching, and collaborating to understand and change their historical condition in the world) curriculum, which is not geared around mandated tests or classroom discipline issues but around the
lives of students. First, ask your students daily to (discern) listen to and learn about others’ lived dominant and nondominant experiences and perspectives around any topic, issue, or subject matter (e.g., read books about slavery from slave’s and master’s perspective). Second, ask students to (interpret) reflect on and compare how what they learn from others differs from their own lived experiences and perspectives (e.g., slavery compared to suspension). Third, ask students to merge (transform) what they learn from others with their evolving theories and practices (praxis) to change and also create a new life and culture in the classroom and outside of school for (social justice) the better of society (e.g., eliminate disproportional suspension).

Dialogic Problem Posing Pedagogy: Transformative education that originates with students’ knowledge and is based on dialogue among the students and teacher as equals. By encouraging critical reflection and integrating theory and practice (praxis), dialogic problem posing pedagogy leads to conscientization, which is a person’s realization that he or she is a creator of culture along with other humans.

Teacher Action or Counteraction: Teach and use dialogic problem posing pedagogy to encourage critical reflection, praxis, and conscientization among your students. First, gather students into a cultural circle by saying, “Please join me in a cultural circle where we will talk about important issues that concern you today (e.g., disproportional suspension).” While in the cultural circle, go through the three-pronged process of critical reflection with students. Continually document evolving theories and practices (praxis) on large charts. When students realize they can do something about the issues at hand together (conscientization about their historical condition of disproportional suspension), work alongside them to develop and implement their ideas for transformation (e.g., speak out against disproportional suspension).

Developing Critical Thinkers: Invite students to engage fully in the teaching and learning process through the use of critical reflection and dialogic problem posing pedagogy, which lead to conscientization and transformation for social justice.

Teacher Action or Counteraction: Build a project-based interactive infrastructure to support your students’ transformative literacy ideas (e.g., speak out against disproportional suspension) by creating a Journalism Club, Drama Club, sports team, or music/video production company—depending on your own teacher expertise or interests. For example, students may speak out against disproportional suspension by:

1. publishing informational and critically reflective articles in the school newspaper about eliminating the condition of disproportional suspension amongst themselves
2. presenting Boal’s Theater of the Oppressed skits that involve audiences in deconstructing the condition of disproportional suspension
3. playing on a basketball team that projects an image and speaks publicly to raise awareness in the community about eliminating the condition of disproportional suspension

4. producing musical videos with lyrics that compare the contexts of slavery and disproportional suspension.

Such classroom infrastructures can support critical thinkers’ ongoing development of transformative literacy and ideas for implementing social justice in their world.

**CRITICALLY REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS: DECONSTRUCTING AND RECONSTRUCTING PRIVILEGE**

Critically reflective questions are provided to encourage teachers to deconstruct and reconstruct their privileged, or ethnocentric, viewpoint, based on dominant ideology. This process will help teachers to discern unproductive student behavior, create alternate interpretations, and create alternate strategies that move them to the development of authentic lived curricula and projects.

*Discerning Privilege:*

1. When and why did Debbie begin to recognize, deconstruct, and discern her own privilege?
2. When and why did Debbie begin discerning student behavior through a reconstructed view of privilege?
3. Describe a particular unfamiliar or uncomfortable student misbehavior that occurs in your classroom continually.
4. Explain how you could discern perceived problematic student behavior in the future through a deconstructed and reconstructed view of privilege.

*Interpreting Privilege:*

1. How did Debbie misinterpret student behavior before she deconstructed her own privilege?
2. How did Debbie interpret student behavior after she deconstructed her own privilege?
3. Think of a time you misinterpreted students’ behavior through a privileged viewpoint. Explain.
4. Think of how you could interpret the same behavior in the future after deconstructing and reconstructing your privilege.

*Transforming Privilege:*

1. When and why did Debbie realize the need to transform her classroom practices?
2. How did Debbie use a reconstructed and transformed view of privilege to transform her classroom practices?
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3. Reflect again on the particular student misbehavior that occurs in your classroom continually and how you typically handle this misbehavior.

4. Think of several alternate interpretations for this perceived misbehavior. Based on each alternate interpretation, think of alternate strategies that may move you toward authentic projects. Describe these authentic projects.
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THE STUDY / TEACHER PRACTICES AROUND EXCLUSIONARY SCHOOL DISCIPLINE

The study explained in this book interrogates teacher practices around exclusionary school discipline. Analysis of those practices generates points of hope, which are helpful for discerning, interpreting, and transforming dominant ideology. The term exclusionary school discipline (colloquially referred to as kicking kids out of class) is as unfamiliar to most teachers as it was to Debbie, the lead researcher in this study, before she first taught at TROY, the public disciplinary alternative, or second chance, school discussed in chapter 1. Yet, exclusionary school discipline is commonly practiced when teachers perceive heightened misbehavior and classroom discipline combined with the fear of losing control in the classroom.

Exclusionary school discipline practices include the referral of disruptive students out of the classroom and their subsequent suspension and expulsion from school (OJJDP, 2012). From a social justice aspect, one of the main problems with exclusionary school discipline consequences is their disproportional negative impact on Black students, particularly males (Skiba et al., 2000; Van Acker, 2007). The disproportionality of African American students, particularly males, in exclusionary school discipline is termed the discipline gap (Monroe, 2005, 2006). As a result of being out of class so much, too many Black students get caught in the school failure, dropout, and juvenile justice cycle, or school-to-prison pipeline (Casella, 2003; Osher et al., 2010; Wald & Losen, 2003).

Many teachers in all types of schools believe that isolation is the best punishment for disruptive students. This belief is based on the premise that separation gives the one who misbehaves time to reflect on what happened, realize the error of his or her ways, and return to the same situation but with a change of behavior and attitude. At the same time, most teachers attest to the fact that students who are isolated for misbehavior rarely change their behavior or attitude for the better. In practice, teachers who use exclusionary school discipline usually try time-outs in the classroom first but often resort to office referrals, unknowingly contributing to students’ suspension or expulsion from school and the school-to-prison pipeline.

After personally experiencing and challenging the predominance of exclusionary school discipline and its consequences in the second chance school, it was troubling for Debbie that this issue was never disclosed during her teacher education program. We, the authors of this book as well as the researchers in this study, are also troubled that a nearby public university’s urban education program offers teacher education
students one classroom management course based on dominant ideological theories of control with the inequities of exclusionary school discipline omitted from the course discussion. It is troubling that the topic of exclusionary school discipline is ignored or dismissed since it is both the most unresolved problem in our schools and the precursor to related unresolved social and academic issues in our country, particularly the school-to-prison pipeline. Most of all, it is troubling that teachers in disciplinary alternative schools, in particular, are not included in the conversations, debates, and research about how to teach their students. The purpose of this book is to acknowledge the undisclosed phenomenon of exclusionary school discipline and commit to wrestling with it for positive change—in particular, to find ways of transforming this oppressive yet understudied educational practice.

This study provides a glimpse into four different classrooms in a public disciplinary alternative school for students who are expelled from their home school for disruptive behavior, involved in the juvenile court system, or both. This is a scholarly study, yet hopefully also a readable story, of why teachers do or do not use exclusionary school discipline. The critical microethnographic research method used necessarily brings in the researchers’—as well as the teachers’ and students’—perspectives during data analysis. Ultimately, this is a story about the consequences of isolation, privilege, power, oppression, and race in education.

DISCIPLINARY ALTERNATIVE SCHOOL CONTEXT

This study took place in a disciplinary alternative school (pseudonym: The School) in Miami-Dade County Public Schools (M-DCPS), Florida, the fourth largest public school district in the country, with approximately 392 schools and 345,000 students (M-DCPS, 2012). Student population in M-DCPS is 62% Latino, 26% African American, and 9% White (Broad Foundation, 2008). Thirty-nine elementary, middle, and high schools with 44,000 Black (67%), Latino (30%), and Haitian (3%) students have struggled academically for years. Students who attend M-DCPS disciplinary alternative schools have been suspended or expelled from struggling mainstream schools or released from detention programs; have higher than district average suspension, truancy, or absence rates; and have lower achievement on standardized reading comprehension tests (M-DCPS, 2012). By default, The School had issues with discipline. How teachers deal with discipline issues was the focus of the study.

Dr. Jones (all names in the study are pseudonyms), The School’s White male principal was interested in the potential connection between the study’s goals and the Positive Behavior Support (PBS) program he had initiated two years earlier. At The School, PBS offered a school-wide point system to assess students’ behavior. PBS has since been officially renamed Positive Behavior Intervention Support (PBIS). However, PBS is used throughout this book since it was the name of the program at the time of the study. The School’s assistant principal, Ms. Garcia, emailed all 25 teachers in The School and requested participants for the study. Six teachers responded as willing participants. From Ms. Garcia’s rankings of the six respondents
THE STUDY / TEACHER PRACTICES AROUND EXCLUSIONARY SCHOOL DISCIPLINE

according to how often they wrote disciplinary referrals, four teachers fit the study criteria: two teachers who frequently used exclusionary school discipline (kicked students out); two teachers who rarely used exclusionary school discipline.

Debbie held a group meeting with the four teacher participants before the study began to explain the study, answer any questions, and develop a tentative observation schedule for each classroom. Debbie, along with the teacher participants, Mr. Jenkins, Ms. Gomez, Mr. Frederek, and Mr. Glass, decided that interview schedules would be figured out after the classroom observations began since “things did not always go as planned” at The School. She also collected official class lists and teachers’ signed consent forms at the meeting. To jumpstart the teachers’ reportedly common problem of collecting students’ signed consent forms (the study required at least four student participants per classroom), each teacher distributed the forms in class immediately. Debbie called the students’ guardians or parents to discuss the study and the consent forms. From 33 students listed, she contacted 8 parents/guardians successfully; left 13 messages; and reached 10 incorrect or disconnected phone numbers.

Before coming into The School officially for the study, Debbie also visited the four classrooms to meet students, answer questions, and collect signed consent forms. Each teacher welcomed Debbie into his or her own unique atmosphere. At first glance, Mr. Jenkins’s classroom resembled an informal conversation around a kitchen table, Ms. Gomez’s a group counseling session, Mr. Frederek’s a lively science classroom, and Mr. Glass’s a silent detention hall. No signed consent forms had come in yet. We, the researchers and teachers, all waited expectantly to begin the study. Finally, Mr. Jenkins, Ms. Gomez, and Mr. Frederek each collected signed consent forms from four students for the study. Mr. Jenkins had two Latino and two Black student participants. Ms. Gomez had one Latino and three Black student participants. Mr. Frederek had four Latino student participants. Mr. Glass did not receive any signed forms from students in his originally selected class period; as a result, he selected another class period that did not conflict with the data collection schedule and successfully collected signed consent forms from one Latino and three Black students. Ultimately, 16 students, four from each class, returned their signed consent forms.

ON THE LOOKOUT FOR BAD BEHAVIOR

The School was in its third year as a single-gender male disciplinary alternative school. It had been temporarily relocated for the year from its previous site on the adjacent lot to an old vocational school building that had been used for administration offices. The structure that previously housed The School had been razed in order to build a contemporary two-story environmentally green magnet school, which was in progress during the study. The busy daily hum of construction could be heard from the new green magnet school’s towering building next door. The School was scheduled for relocation again the following year to an uninhabited elementary school much further south to make room for the new green magnet school’s parking lot. Debbie
could not help but notice the stark difference between the new green magnet school, which was being built for successful (according to dominant ideology) students, versus the old school (i.e., The School in this study), which was left in disrepair for unsuccessful students.

The School resembled traditional vocational school building architecture, consisting of several freestanding buildings and portables. The main office area was located in the front of The School and housed administrative, secretarial, and support personnel offices, and a media center, complete with a computer lab and books. Debbie never saw students using the media center during the study. Classrooms, some of which were housed in portables, were located behind the office area with walkways or hallways leading to each one. Specific areas set up for vocational electives such as auto mechanics, culinary arts, or horticulture also fanned out behind the main office. Vocational electives were offered only to students who had passed the FCAT—their reward. The FCAT—Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test—was the high-stakes test in M-DCPS at the time of the study (FDOE, 2012). Students who failed the FCAT were required to take remedial classes—their punishment. Dominant ideology supports this type of academic reward and punishment protocol in schools. The cafeteria was across the street from the main office. The main functions of the cafeteria were as the place to serve students lunch in several phases and as an auditorium for programs. However, it had a secondary function. After being transported to school in district school buses, students assembled in the cafeteria for a supply check before going to their first class. Students who had the proper supplies in their bookbag received a point—their reward. Students who did not have the proper supplies that day either did not receive a point or were sent to CSI—their punishment. Dominant ideology supports this type of demeaning social reward and punishment protocol, especially in disciplinary alternative schools. Successful students are never congregated in the cafeteria or anywhere for a supply check.

Each day Debbie arrived to conduct the study, she logged in at a designated visitors' sign-in table in front of the main office, which was attended by a personable Black woman. Behind the sign-in table hung a very large PBS poster, promoting The School’s traditional behavior philosophy. The School was one of four schools in M-DCPS that had recently been recognized as a Florida PBS Model School. Students who achieved sufficient points by following the 10 PBS rules got to attend a weekly reward activity. The 10 PBS rules included:

- arrive for class on time punctually, not one second after the passing bell
- wear the proper school uniform
- bring one’s own supplies: paper, pencil or pen
- electronic devices, including ear-phone plug-ins, cell phones, i-pods, and mp-3 players are turned off and out of plain view
- keep one’s hands and feet off of any other person in the classroom
- use appropriate language without profanity
- fully participate in all class activities
– do not create or cause disruptions through one’s language or behavior
– give maximum effort by using one’s capabilities to the fullest extent
– do not leave one’s seat at the closure bell, waiting, instead, for the teacher to dismiss.

On Fridays, the person in charge of student activities traveled from room to room to get the students who were supposed to attend the reward activity for that week. Usually, she had little luck finding them. How would traditionally successful students react if they were given rules and awarded points and a weekly activity for their behavior? Probably the same way. A similar point system existed at TROY, which seemed embarrassing for Debbie to use since she had high expectations for students to learn and love school. She found that student behavior became a nonissue when their authentic reward was gaining academic and social prowess.

Although The School was awarded a Positive Behavior Support model school for Florida the year before the study, the use of PBS was not evident among the teachers in the study. One of the teachers in the study headed the teacher committee that determined The School’s 10 PBS behaviors and regulations for teacher documentation of students’ points. However, all four teachers in the study had reportedly stopped using the documentation protocol by mid-year when the study began.

Even so, The School’s cultural milieu was the 10 PBS rules for rewarding student behavior. Casual conversation and comments heard from teachers insinuated their expected norms from a dominant ideological perspective. The teachers talked about how their students must be coerced into behaving, how they behaved badly so they needed the 10 rules to follow. The teachers talked about how they must always be on the lookout for bad behavior and how students give some teachers a harder time than other teachers. They talked about how they must help students do the academic work since they have learning challenges—that is, bad students are bad learners.

THE FOUR CLASSROOMS

Mr. Jenkins’s culinary arts classroom/kitchen was located across the outside hallway from the main office area in the front of The School. It had all of the recommended colorful culinary arts posters and PBS charts lining the walls. The posters and charts designated the location of The Bench (time-out location) and a place to document points earned by each student as required. However, they got swallowed up by the other things in the room. After being in the room for only a minute, the PBS posters and charts blended into the woodwork and activities literally (see Figures 2 and 3).

The front wall had a board on which the daily vocabulary words were written. Journals for writing and defining vocabulary words for the day were stored in open view near The Bench poster. Writing tables were situated by the front door. At first view, the classroom setup gave the appearance of academic written work going on simultaneously with culinary projects—perhaps sophisticated project-based learning. Debbie wondered how that initial interpretation would play out. The teacher’s computer desk was located near the writing tables on the center of the
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A long culinary work table stretched across the center of the room, separating the writing tables and the kitchen area. Movable cooling and rising racks filled the side of the room opposite the teacher’s desk. The smell of freshly baked cookies and bread was common. Large kitchen appliances were located in the center of the kitchen area; storage shelves and cabinets covered the back periphery (see Figure 4).

Debbie conducted classroom observations near the front door at the table that openly stored students’ journals and glossaries for vocabulary work. Mr. Jenkins and his students were always busy.
In contrast, Ms. Gomez’s language arts classroom was located on the opposite side of the school in a separate wing of six classrooms. The sun shone brightly into the rectangular-shaped room, which also had colorful language arts posters and PBS charts lining the walls and front of a cabinet. Student desks were situated in a circle near the front door. Upon first view, it appeared like meaningful dialogue may occur in this classroom. But after scanning the classroom for a few minutes, Debbie noticed standardized testing practice materials. To the right of the front door, in the corner, was a tall bookshelf that held language arts textbooks and FCAT workbooks. Were the FCAT workbooks in her shelves for show (accountability) or used for test preparation? A white board, the teacher’s bicycle, and the teacher’s computer desk lined the adjacent wall. To the right of the teacher’s desk was a table that housed neatly organized trade books near part of a computer station. Separated by a back door, the rest of the computer station lined the back wall. In the center of the room was a kidney-shaped table with chairs, where we met with the teachers before the study; students did not sit here.

To the left of the front door was another white board. Behind it was a table in the back of the room that blocked the cabinet door where Debbie conducted classroom observations. Ms. Gomez expected students to ignore the camera. For example, when a student (Dann) asked about the video camera or my presence, Gomez reminded him to pretend that the video camera was not there. She answered, “Why are we doing the [silent pause] that’s not here? We already talked about that when she was here before.” Ms. Gomez also eased his concerns of “other students watching us” by confirming that no other students would watch the videos. Students were always asking off-the-topic questions.

Mr. Frederek’s science classroom was located at the back of The School in one of two portable buildings on site. Between the office and this classroom was
a neglected horticulture garden. It was the third of three classrooms, next door to CSI, in the portable on the left. Facing this portable building, divided by a concrete slab, was an identical portable. At one end of this rectangular room was a student restroom, sink, folder storage table, and window overlooked the parking lot for staff or visitors. Debbie conducted classroom observations here near several haphazardly-located science supply boxes. The teacher’s computer desk, audio-visual equipment, and another window were at the other end of the classroom near the front door. Six student tables were spaced out in the middle of the classroom in three rows, facing the white board on the wall to the left of the front door (see Figure 5).

Mr. Frederek used one long table that stood near the white board to organize materials needed to teach each class. A tall cabinet, a low bookshelf, and another long table lined the opposite wall behind the student tables and held science supplies and textbooks. Colorful science posters, maps, and PBS charts covered the walls. At first glance, it appeared like meaningful dialogue could occur in this classroom. How would this initial interpretation play out? Mr. Frederek and his students glanced toward the camcorder periodically. Before class on the first day, one student walked past the camcorder, blurted a surprised expletive, and flexed his muscle. Others quietly watched him.

Mr. Glass’s language arts classroom was located next door to Ms. Gomez’s. This was convenient when observing immediately during the next period. The sun shone brightly into the rectangular-shaped room. Just inside the front door of this classroom to the right stood a tall bookshelf filled with literature reference books and textbooks, and some dictionaries. Eight small cut-outs illustrating literature genres were affixed to the wall above the white board adjacent to the bookshelf (see Figure 6).

To the left of the front door was a small table where observations were conducted. The wall behind the table was lined with PBS posters, charts, and another white
board. In the back corner were the teacher’s computer desk, overhead projector, and tall storage cabinet. Beside the cabinet on the back wall was a bulletin board reserved for exemplary work and a table with folders organized by class periods (see Figure 7).

Student desks were organized in rows and faced different directions depending on the day’s lesson plan. For example, desks faced the television, which was hanging from the front corner, if students watched an English literature play that day. On these days, some of the window shades were pulled down for easier viewing. Desks faced the wall opposite the windows if Mr. Glass lectured with the overhead projector.
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day. At first glance, this classroom looked like a traditional classroom, set up with sparse imagination. How would this initial interpretation play out? Mr. Glass talked loudly before, during, and after the classroom observations. Students rarely talked.

TAKING A CLOSER LOOK

The purpose of this critical microethnographic study was to explore the relationship between classroom interactions and exclusionary school discipline as a social practice within and across four classrooms in the same disciplinary alternative school. The goal was to find potential spaces for transformation of (i.e., ways to transform) oppressive educational practices and conditions (Osher at al., 2010; Rex & Schiller, 2009).

Social Interaction Patterns

The study had two objectives. The first objective was to find out what influences teachers in a disciplinary alternative school to use or not use exclusionary discipline during (potential) disciplinary moments, or classroom conflicts. This meant taking a closer look at what happens routinely in each classroom (i.e., social interaction patterns). Is the classroom a welcoming or unwelcoming space? What does it sound and look like when the teacher and students interact during disciplinary moments? How do they treat each other? What verbal and nonverbal interactions occur over and over, and to what end? What do the teacher and students think is happening and why? What is being learned, both socially and academically, as a result of social interaction patterns? How do the teachers’ and students’ actions mirror or not mirror society’s expectations of them?

To discern and interpret social interaction patterns in critical microethnography, multiple stages of data collection and analysis were conducted. This book does not get into a detailed description of the stages of data collection and analysis but a brief summary is provided here (for more information on the method, see Pane, 2009; Pane & Rocco, 2009; and Pane, Rocco, Miller, & Salmon, 2013). To begin, each classroom was observed and videorecorded for a total of five hours each, supplemented with researcher notes and initial interpretations. After this, the videos from each classroom were viewed multiple times to find a crucial 20-minute segment that included a representative disciplinary (or potential disciplinary) moment and how it was handled. Each representative segment was burned onto a DVD. Initial interpretations of what was going on had everything to do with researcher experiences. In order to understand all sides of the story, and analyze the information, or data, collected without pointing the proverbial finger, participants’ viewpoints were necessarily collected through interviews. Interviews with teachers and students provided essential background information and authentic perspectives. First, individual teacher interviews were conducted to get at how teachers viewed teaching at The School. Then, video data feedback interviews were conducted as
follows. Each teacher and each group of students watched the representative DVD from their respective classroom separately. While watching, they talked about what they thought was happening and why. Interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed for analysis. To make sense of all of the information (data) collected, each DVD was viewed over and over to transcribe verbatim what was being said. Then, Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) of the verbal and nonverbal was conducted by going back through the transcripts and marking on them to show how things were being said or done.

CDA in education is a tool for studying the relationship between language and society more fully through a critical social theory lens (Bakhtin, 1981, 1986; Fairclough, 1995, 2003; Gee, 1996, 2006; Rogers, 2004; Rogers, Malancharuvil-Berkes, Mosley, Hui, & Joseph, 2005). CDA is a tool for theorizing the uses of language that influence teachers, in this study, to use or not use exclusionary discipline during (potential) disciplinary moments, which are “patterns of classroom interaction that often precede a suspension” (Vavrus & Cole, 2002, p. 89). CDA illuminates “social practices and identities at work in society” (Gee, 2005, p. 294). Unlike other discourse analysis methods which offer only a description and interpretation of discourse in context, CDA includes an “explanation of why and how discourses work” (Rogers, 2004, p. 2). CDA critiques discourse in contexts to understand language in use assumed to be “constructing and constructed by social, cultural, political, and economic contexts” (p. 10). CDA interrogates how and why discourse influences the learning processes and cycles of social reproduction. Social reproduction contrives outcomes (i.e., exclusionary school discipline) that constrain or penalize those who are not in charge, so to speak. Social reproduction thrives in the culture of power (Delpit, 1995) in a particular situation. CDA procedures systematically and reflexively move between a micro- and macro-analysis of the texts and contexts of discourse to describe, interpret, and explain what is happening and what is not happening.

After completing CDA, the transcripts were reviewed again and again to analyze them further in different ways and from different viewpoints. Next, matches of what the teachers and students thought about what was happening and why were found. Last, similarities and differences were gathered and organized to come up with potential spaces for transformation. In this study, potential spaces for transformation were defined as actions, reactions, and interactions that regularly lead to exclusionary discipline practices but could be acknowledged and changed. Within these spaces are points of hope that lead to practices of hope for teachers—rather than burnout. Even though these spaces may be tiny, we have to start somewhere right away—without waiting for superman (Darling-Hammond, 2011; Perry, Moses, Wynne, Cortés, & Delpit, 2010).

Cultural Power

The second objective was to find potential spaces for transformation in (or ways to change) the oppressive educational practices (i.e., cultural power) that occurred
during disciplinary moments. These spaces are the points, or origins, of hope that lead to practices of hope for breaking and ultimately transforming the school-to-prison pipeline. This second objective is crucial for two reasons. First, we as a society must have faith in teachers to make agentic decisions in the classroom that result in productive learning outcomes for their students. Most teachers become teachers because of their love on some level for their subject matter or their desire to help people succeed. However, most teachers we know or as reported in the literature have not been taught or empowered beforehand to work problems out alongside their students and reap positive transformative outcomes. They have not learned to discern and interpret these problems as unproductive social interaction patterns, based in cultural power, and to transform them into productive academic and social learning opportunities. They have lost hope and suffer from the dominant ideological notion of teacher burnout, which is considered a dead end in the teaching profession. Second, we as a society have had enough bad news in education and research. We need to empower teachers to transform our tired and oppressive ways of how we do school for too many Black (and more recently Latino) students who are caught in the school-to-prison pipeline (Skiba et al., 2011).

To discern and interpret cultural power in critical microethnography, we looked closely for unequal power relations in social interaction patterns. Locating unequal power relations in social interaction patterns enabled us to spot distortions in language use that are tangible enough to target for change (i.e., potential spaces for transformation). Language is at the forefront of daily classroom life, but looking at education differently for transformative purposes as we did in this study involves understanding how and why language use impacts power relations, social identity, and macro-processes (influences outside of the classrooms; Bloome, Carter, Christian, Otto, & Shuart-Faris, 2005). Looking at education differently for transformative purposes means taking a closer look at what and why things happen between people through a reconceptualized lens (Varenne, 2008).

Critical social theory guided our thinking throughout this critical microethnographic study in order to reconceptualize the research context, data collection methods, tools for analysis and ultimately our search for cultural power in classroom interactions. Interactive power analysis helped determine “who has what kind of power and why” (Carspecken, 1996, p. 129) and who has the most say in defining and determining the end result of interactions. This means understanding that power accompanies all actions and makes a difference in the subsequent events, “no matter how large or small” (p. 128). However, even in the most constraining or coercive situations, participants have the choice to disobey or not comply in theory.

Depending on how language is used, participants can accept, resist, and/or transform educational practices—that is, all students (and teachers, for that matter) are people who resist and produce language together with each other (Moje & Lewis, 2007). In this study, unequal power relations relating to historical, sociological, and political contexts of disciplinary alternative education were actively acknowledged and critiqued (Barton & Hamilton, 2000; Berkenkotter & Thein, 2005; Tusting & Barton,
For example, how teacher-student interaction patterns encourage or constrain identity development was critiqued. Who dominates or cares for others in particular situations (i.e., power relations during disciplinary moments) was interrogated. Also, how teachers and students purposefully recreate themselves (i.e., use agency) within shifting power relations, especially during disciplinary moments, was questioned.

Based on the integration of specific social interaction patterns and types of power, teachers’ and students’ roles in the classroom were found and named in order to discover cultural power. Cultural power is noticed when tacit claims are distorted, recognized, and reflected by unequal power relations among participants whether unconsciously or semiconsciously. Cultural power is entangled with distorted classroom relationship expectations. To spot the distortions, the claim to universality made by a participant assumes that all agree to the validity of the claim. When the norms and values claimed do not represent mutual interest of everyone involved and are false unreal choices, cultural power is at play. In reality, power and action are intertwined but the success of one’s actions is dependent on how powerful the actions are—that is, how far removed the actions are from coercion. Cultural power is at its height when verbal and nonverbal inputs and interactions are most unequal among participants (i.e., during exclusionary discipline practices). Thus, cultural power is undesirable (Pane et al., 2013).

Studying teacher practices around exclusionary school discipline involves understanding how these practices may or may not contribute to the broader issue of the school-to-prison pipeline. This study found that various forms of discourse, interacting within layers of system constraints, accounted for teachers’ use or non-use of exclusionary discipline with students. Specifically, classroom interactions, learning processes, and exclusionary school discipline practices were cyclically and rigidly intertwined in dominant educational discourse. Dominant educational discourse, based in systematic and systemic prejudices, racism, and power relations, implicitly shaped the school and classroom discourses which, in turn, shaped and solidified the dominant discourse, repeating the cycles of prejudice, racism and power relations. School discourses included surveillance, reward, and punishment. Opportunities for academic (particularly literacy) and social identity development were missing.

Classroom verbal and nonverbal discourses included patterns of teacher authoritarianism, student disruptive behavior, and teacher threats to maintain control. Learning processes involved cyclical discourses of teacher lecturing unrelated to students’ backgrounds, student passivity, and distorted power relations rather than social, cultural, racial, and academic empowerment and development that could have included parents and community members (Dryfoos, 1998). As a result, teachers and students were trapped in the dominant educational discourse of decision-making to superficially retain their identities and achieve some of their goals (Ríos, 1996).
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Based on the examination of specific teacher-student social interactions that influence teachers’ decisions to use or not use exclusionary school discipline, four social interaction patterns emerged—resistance, accommodation, conformism, and negotiation. These terms were adapted from Giroux’s (2001) theory of resistance in education and Third Space theory (Gutiérrez, 2008; Wilson, 2003). Normative power, coercive power, interactively established contracts, and charm were analyzed through the use of Carspecken’s (1996) typology of interactive power. Findings showed that social interaction patterns and cultural power were exhibited and integrated in different ways, to varying degrees, and for different purposes to influence each teacher’s use or non-use of exclusionary discipline.

Overall, teachers’ decision making and actions were guided by the constraints of dominant (alternative education) ideology, The School ideology, and incongruent student-teacher goals. More exclusionary school discipline practices, fewer academic interactions, and more incongruence between teacher-student goals occurred in classrooms with more cultural power at play. In the following chapters, we tell stories from each classroom to illustrate findings from the study regarding teacher practices around exclusionary school discipline in the context of the broader issue of the school-to-prison pipeline.

TAKE AWAYS

Exclusionary School Discipline: The practice of isolating students for perceived disruptive behavior, based on dominant ideology. It begins in the classroom when teachers first try timeouts (which have been shown not to work effectively in the research) but often resort to writing referrals to remove students from class (i.e., colloquially known as kicking kids out), unknowingly contributing to students’ suspension or expulsion from school and the school-to-prison pipeline.

Teacher Action or Counteraction: To counteract exclusionary school discipline, consider how you would discipline your own child in the same situation. Would you, or when would you, exclude your child from any or all family activities, for example? Instead of using exclusion or isolation as a sole punishment in all situations, help the student prevent similar problems in the future by going to the student quietly, helping him or her critically reflect on the problem, and helping him or her figure out practical ways of avoiding it in the future. Develop a safe and caring classroom culture that you and your students can solve problems together more successfully over time.

Discipline Gap: The disproportionality of African American, and more recently Latino, students—particularly males—in exclusionary school discipline compared to their White peers.

Teacher Action or Counteraction: To counteract the discipline gap, prevent students from missing your class. Rely on culturally responsive pedagogy as a
proactive counteraction to exclusionary school discipline rather than relying on a one size fits all approach to classroom instruction and behavior management. Use culturally responsive pedagogy to actively recognize, value, and build on your students’ cultural strengths. Openly state and act on your high expectations for all students. For example, engage all students in critical thinking about multicultural literature that relates to their cultural and racial backgrounds and lived experiences.

Traditional Behavior Philosophy: A systemic approach to dealing with classroom or school discipline that prioritizes the assessment, reward, and punishment of specific behaviors, based on dominant ideology (e.g., Positive Behavior Support)

Teacher Action or Counteraction: To counteract traditional behavior philosophy, develop a democratic caring classroom community of learners who openly discuss matters of importance and intellect rather than prioritizing a list of specific behaviors to monitor, reward, and punish during class. Involve the community of learners in developing and maintaining classroom academic and social behaviors that empower them to pursue and achieve high expectations and goals.

Potential Spaces for Transformation: Actions, reactions, and interactions that lead to exclusionary school discipline practices but can be acknowledged and changed. These potential spaces for transformation are the points, or origins, of hope that lead to practices of hope for breaking and ultimately transforming the school-to-prison pipeline. Within these spaces are points of hope that also lead to practices of hope for teachers—rather than burnout.

Teacher Action or Counteraction: To find potential spaces for transformation, discern, interpret, and transform your own dominant ideology about power relationships and social interaction patterns in your own classroom. With this transformed ideology, view and interpret students’ perceived misbehaviors and your actions and reactions to them in order to find potential spaces for transformation. Use teacher practices that empower you and your students with hope rather than oppress you and your students with punishment and isolation. For example, instead of viewing African American students’ play fighting as disruptive and isolating them in timeout, you may view this cultural behavior as useful energy for an African American history dramatic production. Use this potential space for transformation to direct students’ energy toward learning about their histories, writing skits about what they have learned, and performing the skits for various audiences.

Cultural Power: Unequal or distorted power relations in social interaction patterns that result in unproductive or oppressive teacher practices around exclusionary school discipline.
Teacher Action or Counteraction: To counteract cultural power, proactively prevent
disciplinary moments (i.e., classroom conflicts) with caring democratic socially
culturally appropriate classroom interactions. Seek and encourage students’ input and participation
in productive academic and social learning opportunities. For example, develop
students’ expertise and simultaneously direct students’ energy toward producing
skits about slavery in African American history. First, read and watch an episode
of each chapter of Alex Haley’s “Roots.” After key scenes in each episode, stop
to discuss various perspectives, languages, and Discourses compared to students’
perspectives, languages, and Discourses in similar situations. Document this
discussion on a large chart. After discussions, enact and video record students’
retelling of each key scene without rehearsal. After watching the entire episode,
use the video recorded enactments as drafts from which to develop final skits for
performance.

Resistance: A form of refusal, whether implicitly or explicitly, that highlights the
need to struggle against submission to domination. In this case, resistance involves
critique, self-reflection, and struggles against rules, regulations, behaviors or other
outcomes, based on dominant ideology, that constrain classrooms or schooling
structures.

Teacher Action or Counteraction: To develop productive resistance,

1. critique the behavior management system at your school in the context of
equitable and inequitable schooling opportunities. Does this system require you
to prioritize the assessment, reward, and punishment of student behavior to the
neglect of academic (especially literacy) teaching and learning opportunities? Do
your students exhibit forms of resistance to your teaching practices in the context
of the behavior management system at your school?

2. self-reflect on your teaching practices in the context of your critique of your
school’s behavior management system. Do your teaching practices support
your school’s behavior management system protocol with successful student
outcomes? If not, struggle to change your teaching practices to provide all of
your students with equitable outcomes.

3. struggle to find potential spaces for transformation in the context of your teaching
practices around the school’s behavior management system. Do you desire for
your teaching practices to encourage your students to channel their cultural
behaviors toward learning from each other by listening, negotiating, critically
reflecting, and developing positive, congruent norms and outcomes for their
specific situation? If so, create a classroom culture, based on a communities of
practice perspective (Pane, 2010), as a form of teacher resistance of the dominant
behavior management system in your school. From a communities of practice
perspective, student resistance is recognized as a potential space for readjusting
the classroom structure to allow the student to negotiate success (rather than as
misbehavior). For example, invite your African American students who exhibit
play fighting to experience success immediately by channeling their energies into vibrant discussions of episodes of “Roots” that lead to video recording and performing of student-created skits about what they have learned in the process.

Accommodation: Simultaneous coping or accepting of domination (e.g., Positive Behavior Support ideology) while exhibiting some form of resistance to it.

Teacher action or counteraction: To counteract accommodation, recognize and change your teacher practices of teacher accommodation that lead to unsuccessful or oppressive student outcomes. If you find yourself leaving school daily feeling burned out, upset, or disgusted with how things turned out that day, ask yourself if and how you accommodated domination. Did you cope with perceived student misbehavior in ways that constrained your teaching practices? Did you cope with school-wide regulations in ways that led to unsuccessful student outcomes? If so, practice using a form of resistance that will change the unsuccessful outcomes in your classroom that result from hopeless practice of coping. For example, after recognizing that you have been consistently recommending African American male students (who play around too much during class) for suspension (which your school’s behavior management system supports), you determine that this is a coping mechanism for getting the students out of your hair. However, this practice does not provide students with learning opportunities. To make productive changes in your classroom, you first study your students’ cultural behaviors to find out that play fighting is an accepted African American Discourse. With your new alternative perspective on this behavior, you decide (i.e., use agency) to change your teaching practices by channeling your students’ energies with culturally responsive pedagogy, which encourages students’ active participation around culturally relevant materials and Discourses.

Conformism: A form of behavior, which is the opposite of resistance, that simultaneously suppresses classroom conflicts and merges with dominant ideology. It presumes the existence of an authority figure with the necessary knowledge to determine and issue decisions.

Teacher action or counteraction: To counteract conformism, discern, interpret, and transform your dominant ideology that leads to your teacher practices of conformism and unsuccessful or oppressive student outcomes. Teachers who practice rote methods and thinking processes with their students will reproduce students who practice rote methods and thinking processes. For example, instead of conforming rotely to the protocol of giving points to students who do not have the proper school supplies (no matter what their situation is at home) can be transformed by simply asking the student quietly if he or she needs a pack of paper and providing it if necessary. Then, do some research into his home situation in order to know how to proceed from there.
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Negotiation: The interactive struggle among members of a community of practice to learn different perspectives and methods of interacting with various people, to create new cultural forms of social and societal activity, and to transform conditions, identities, and forms of membership.

Teacher action or counteraction: To develop productive negotiations, work alongside students to provide empowering academic and social learning opportunities for social justice. Teachers whose teaching practices are empowered by transformative ideology will, in turn, empower students to discern, interpret, and transform their own dominant ideology about their education practices. For example, after you researched the student’s home situation (mentioned above) and found that the adults have no jobs at the moment, you gather the community of practice together to negotiate ways of solving the problem of school supplies in their own classroom. Based on a platform of social justice, work alongside students to develop a plan of action that involves social and civic action. Perhaps the group will decide to hold regular fundraisers to buy school supplies to keep in a classroom cabinet for students to use as needed.

CRITICALLY REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS: DECONSTRUCTING AND RECONSTRUCTING TRADITIONAL BEHAVIOR PHILOSOPHY

Critically reflective questions are provided to encourage teachers to deconstruct and reconstruct traditional behavior philosophy, based on dominant ideology. This process will help teachers to discern unproductive teacher practices around exclusionary school discipline, create alternate interpretations, and create alternate strategies that move them to the development of authentic lived curricula and projects.

Discerning Traditional Behavior Philosophy:

1. How was exclusionary school discipline supported whether unconsciously or semiconsciously in The School’s traditional behavior philosophy?
2. How was exclusionary school discipline supported whether unconsciously or semiconsciously in the teachers’ traditional behavior philosophy in each of the four classrooms?
3. Describe how exclusionary school discipline is supported whether unconsciously or semiconsciously in your school or your classroom’s traditional behavior philosophy.
4. Explain how you could discern the support of exclusionary school discipline whether unconsciously or semiconsciously in the future through a deconstructed and reconstructed view of traditional behavior philosophy.

Interpreting Traditional Behavior Philosophy:

1. When and why did traditional behavior philosophy support teacher practices around exclusionary school discipline at The School?
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2. When and why did traditional behavior philosophy support teacher practices around exclusionary school discipline in each of the four classrooms?
3. Reflect on when and why traditional behavior philosophy supports teacher practices around exclusionary school discipline in your school or your classroom.
4. Explain how you could interpret teacher practices around exclusionary school discipline in the future after deconstructing and reconstructing your own view of traditional behavior philosophy.

Transforming Traditional Behavior Philosophy:

1. Describe how alternate interpretations of traditional behavior philosophy may lead to alternate strategies and productive teacher practices.
2. Think of a particular student misbehavior that occurs continually in your classroom. Now think of several alternate interpretations of traditional behavior philosophy for this perceived misbehavior. Based on your discernment and alternate interpretations, think of several ways you could transform teacher practices around exclusionary school discipline in your own classroom.
3. Reflect on a particular unproductive teacher practice around exclusionary school discipline that you use continually with the previously mentioned perceived misbehavior. Describe how transforming your interpretation of traditional behavior philosophy around this perceived misbehavior may lead you to develop alternate strategies and more productive teacher practices.
4. Based on your alternate interpretation of the previously mentioned perceived misbehavior, explain several alternate strategies that may move you toward authentic projects. Describe these authentic projects.