

Schooling in Babylon, Babylon in School: When Racial Profiling and Zero Tolerance Converge

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Introduction

We refuse to be what you want us to be
We are what we are, that's the way it's going to be
You can't educate I for no equal opportunity
Talking about freedom, people freedom and liberty . . .

Babylon system is a vampire
Sucking the children day by day
Babylon system is the vampire
Sucking the blood of the sufferers
Building church and university
Deceiving the people continually
Me say them graduating thieves and murderers . . .

(Bob Marley, *Survival Album*, 1979)

"Babylon system," as Marley's lyrics above define it, is a vampire system of oppression, exploitation and control that restricts the freedom and liberty of colonized peoples, especially Blacks. According to Rastafarian doctrine the negative imagery of Babylon is rooted historically in the Bible where it symbolizes a corrupt secular state as opposed to Zion that refers to a perfect state. Rastafarian doctrine makes linkages between Babylonian-Roman empires of state-church domination and later, another linkage with British and American empires and systems of domination in the Western world. This doctrine depicts Babylon as "a whole complex of institutions which conspire to keep the black man enslaved in the western world and which attempts to subjugate coloured peoples throughout the world" (Owens, 1976, p. 70)

"Schooling in Babylon" is therefore depicted as a kind of socialization and indoctrination into the norms, values, traditions, language, history of the colonizer to ensure that the "white-washing" is complete (Owens, 1976). Schools become central institutions in this culture of oppression that dominates the socio-economic, political, legal and cultural life of the oppressed.

But as conflict theorists argue domination is not complete. Political themes of resistance and rebellion are strident in reggae music. "It raises the critical consciousness of black youth to the exploitation, poverty, inequality, liberation and critical experience of suffering" (Cashmore, 1994, p.291). Schools become the micro-political terrain where the struggle between the oppressor and the oppressed is played out.

The concept of "Babylon in school" depicts institutional agents maintaining and reproducing the authority structure within educational settings. A hierarchy of school personnel: principals, vice principals, guidance counsellors and teachers with well defined roles, ensure that top-down rules and regulations are maintained. Increasingly, law enforcement agents such as the police have made their way into schools to reinforce the authority structure. Minority groups perceive such police "Babylon" presence as a continuity of surveillance and containment from the community into the school. Thus the school becomes both the agent and agency of oppression, a site of struggle and contestation between rule-makers and rule-breakers.

This article is timely; it reports on a field-based research project and makes a critical contribution to the current media-generated debates on the problems of institutional authority and the schooling of black students.¹ Further, it provides an analysis of the concept and practice of "racial profiling" of Blacks by institutional agents, the policy of "zero tolerance" in schools and its disproportionate removal of racial minorities from classroom learning. These factors contribute to the notion and process of the "school-prison pipeline" advanced by Skiba et al. (2003).

The Black male and authority relations

In this review of the research we focus on how educational structures in Britain, the United States and Canada respond to Blacks as a racialized minority², and how their responses to males, in particular, help to construct them as a group to be feared, monitored, and channelled to restrictive learning environments. Carby's (1982) British study uncovers strategies utilized by a network of institutions to intervene in all aspects of black life. As a law enforcement agency, the police collaborated with the school an army of youth workers, community workers, social workers, probation officers, school counsellors to intervene in the domestic, public, social and educational lives of disenfranchised youth. Under the guise of developing good police-community relations, the police invaded the academic lives of students. This strategy is often referred to as a "soft-centred" form of control with the objective of reducing lawlessness in the community and developing law abiding citizens out of black Youth. Carby concludes: "The construction of the 'fear' of crime by black youth is used as a justification to police them in schools. Policing them in the classroom also aids with identifying and monitoring black youth on the

streets"(p.207).

Subsequent British studies (Furlong, 1984; Gillborn, 1988; Mac an Ghaill, 1989; Sewell, 1997a & 1997b) document the continued negative attitudes and coercive behaviours of school personnel toward black males. The characterization of these students as aggressive, violent, disruptive, and deviant grew out of a discourse of fear, as is evident in Sewell's (1997a) work: *Teacher attitude: Who's afraid of the big black boy?* The presence of fear and social distancing between white teachers and black youth creates an inhospitable climate for the teaching-learning process.

Many of these "black behaviours" displayed in such places as school hallways, staircases, cafeteria and parking lots are censored and labelled by school personnel as scary, "hyper-aggressive," and "gang-like". In a Canadian study, a white female teacher admits:

At times, I'm literally scared of them [black youth]. Going down the hallways, especially near the exits to the rear of the [school] building, and running into a group of six or more, you get a real eerie feeling; and I've known female teachers who simply turn around instead of passing that group. (Solomon & Brown, 1998: 111)

In the United States, the school environment was similarly inhospitable to black students. They were again marginalized in classroom social relations as teachers provided much more learning opportunities, open encouragement, extended directions rewards, praise and reinforcement to white students. The authority structure and power relations generated by mistrust and fear based on racial bias are well documented (Ferguson, 2001; Hopkins, 1977; Kreisberg, 1992, Kunjufu, 1983 ; Watson and Smitherman, 1992). Murray and Clark (1990) conclude, "(R)acism exists when school leaders down play the existence, gravity or the significance of acts of bias against minority students" (p. 24). Most of these studies focused on black male culture of resistance and the system's coercive responses to it. As black youths become alienated from a school structure they perceive as not representing their interest, they develop a vibrant, dynamic, non-conformist, counter-school culture that is threatening to the authority structures. The reallocation of resources from teaching to security personnel and sophisticated electronic surveillance systems re-position these institutions of learning as sites of control and containment. Blacks and other students from marginalized groups again find their educational and social growth as citizens in a democratic state seriously compromised.

In multiracial Canada, the authority relations within its institutions is mediated, to a large extent, by race. The influx of African Caribbeans into Canada following the de-racialization of its immigration policies in the late 1960s made visible a brand of racism that escaped publicity over the years. Established and entrenched European norms, values, traditions pervasive in Canadian institutions immediately cast new racialized minority immigrants as socio-culturally dislocated, dysfunctional, and deviant in their family, community, and school life (da Costa, 1978; Dei, 1996; Solomon and Brown, 1998). To maintain some measure of power and control in their schools and communities these students developed distinct sub-cultural forms of behaviour as a response to imposed control. Such a strident sub-culture collided with the authority of the school causing a spiralling of negative interactions that often led to the intervention of the police in schools. As Solomon's (1992) research uncovers:

The police are integral in the schools' student control mechanism. Their essential functions are to respond to emergency situations such as fights, to be on duty at special school functions, to investigate and apprehend trespassers and trouble makers on school property, and to be a symbol of authority to uncooperative and oppositional students. The Jocks [black informants] resent their threatening presence and their use by the administration to maintain the authority structure. (p. 89)

What has emerged from the literature is the construction of Blacks as fearful, deviant, socially dysfunctional, non-conformist and a threat to the safety and smooth functioning of the school as a social system. Moving from the sociological construction to applied profiling, The Ontario Human Rights Commission (2003) Inquiry Report: *Paying the price: The human cost of racial profiling*, defines racial profiling as:

any action undertaken for reason of safety, security or public protection that relies on stereotypes of race, colour, ethnicity, ancestry, religion, or place of origin rather than on reasonable suspicion, to single out an individual for greater scrutiny or different treatment. (p.6)

The report provides examples of those in position of power and authority to practise racial profiling as law enforcement officials, private security guards, custom officers and school authorities. It is to this latter group and its supporting policies that we now turn.

Safe schools policies and "zero tolerance"

Rigid school discipline, codes of conduct, and zero tolerance have brought a new dimension to the management of student behaviours in schools. A growing concern over the perceived increase in school violence, the prevalence of guns and drug use in U.S. schools in the 1980s and 90s led to more severe penalties with the hope that these would reduce intolerable behaviours in school. Zero tolerance policies for these and other school infractions were gradually implemented in school jurisdictions across the U.S. and Canada without the benefit of research confirming that such disciplinary measures result in safer schools (Ayers, Ayers & Dohrn, 2001; Casella, 2001; Jull, 2000; Shannon & McCall (n.d.); Skiba and Peterson, 1999).

These and other researchers have launched a wide-ranging critique of zero tolerance and its impact on schools, their social relations and the students they serve. Such critique includes:

- the growing popularity of zero tolerance as the approach that will secure schools as safe learning environments for students and media's contribution to such popularity through its sensationalization of violence and their misuse of statistics that vilify youth and their culture (Ayers et al. 2001; Jull, 2000; Skiba & Peterson, 1999);
- the displacement of troubled youth from the controlled social learning environment of the school to their less controlled neighbourhoods where they engage in more serious offences (Ayers et al., 2001; Skiba et al. 2003; Thorson, 1996);
- school administrators' abdication of their responsibility for students' education and safety to security guards, law enforcement agencies and the juvenile court system (Ayers et al, 2001; Casella, 2001; Solomon, 1992); and
- zero tolerance policies' "one size fits all" approach based on the assumption that such policies are non-discriminatory and treat all students equally. But they, instead, disadvantage marginalized groups (Jull, 2000; Cole, 1999; Epp, 1997; Skiba & Peterson, 1999; Larson & Ovando, 2001; Shannon & McCall, (n.d.); Skiba and Peterson, 1999).

The Canadian Association of Principals (CAP) report: *Zero tolerance policies in Context: A preliminary investigation to identify actions to improve school discipline and school safety* (Shannon & McCall [n.d]) raises serious questions about the rigidity and prescriptive nature of zero tolerance policies, the variance in interpretation and implementation of such policies, and the unintended consequences of zero tolerance (pp. 3-4)

All these critiques indicate the pervasiveness of the issue, but it is this last critique that is of most relevance to this paper. Zero tolerance policies do not take into consideration the social and environmental contexts of interpersonal interaction when deliberating youth's infraction of school rules and regulations. The emerging research appears to point to a zero tolerance policy that discriminates against Blacks more than any other racial groups. Jull argues:

School discipline policies based on the principles of zero tolerance reinforce Anglo-Eurocentric sensibilities of right and wrong and the authoritative structures within public education. . . . To claim that social justice can be achieved through the implementation of a so-called unbiased zero tolerance school discipline policy is to believe that discriminatory practice can be eradicated by implementing policies that are blind to personal or individual social and/or cultural contexts.... Equal treatment in an unequal social and academic environment is discriminatory. (p. 4)

Emerging from the research on black students and institutional structures in Britain, the United States and Canada are some conceptual and theoretical issues that inform the present study. The nature of power and power relations in institutional settings is top-down, impositional and coercive and is imposed under the guise of maintenance of discipline. Essential to the maintenance of power and authority is a network of structures: the school, social service agencies in the community, and the criminal justice system that operate in symbiotic relationship with each other.

Students who feel victimized by the system engage in this counter-hegemonic struggle using "cultural power," a creative use of popular sub-cultural forms generated from their ethnic heritages and their lived experiences of struggle. This collision of cultural empowerment and the institutional power of schools set up a spiralling negative interaction that leads to alienation and distancing between students and school authority. Such a conflict often results in the enforcement of the zero tolerance policy and the students' eventual exclusion from school.

The rest of this paper provides students' accounts of how power and authority operate within schools and the communities in which they reside and how their lives were impacted in these settings. We analyse these narratives within the larger framework of racial profiling in multiracial societies and zero tolerance policies within schools. We conclude with some strategies for transforming schools into more equitable and accountable institutions for racialized minorities.

Research setting and participants

The study was conducted in 1995-96 in an urban residential school, Hopeful Village Youth Centre (pseudonym), a provincially operated institution for incarcerated youth. The school operates in conjunction with a treatment and correctional facility within the same physical complex. The Centre serves a large metropolitan area in Ontario and the students are young offenders who are sentenced to this institution with a history of behavioural problems in their home, school and community. Under the Young Offenders Act of Canada, a young offender is one who has committed an offence and is convicted and sentenced to serve time in a secure setting. In addition to being removed from their home communities for a period of custody, youths who break the law are placed in a setting such as Hopeful Village where professionals are committed to identifying and responding to their needs, with the goals of fostering personal growth and ultimately achieving community reintegration.

At the time of the study the Centre accommodated about 70 male and female students altogether, ranging in age from 14 to 18 years. There were approximately 75 residential counsellors, teachers, youth officers, clinicians, and other medical and

therapeutic staff. All but seven were white, and of the seven, four were of African heritage.

There was an over-representation of African-Caribbean boys at the Centre; Whites as well as other ethnic minority youth reflected the diversity of the catchment area of the Centre but represented to a lesser extent. Participants in the study were 15 male students of African-Caribbean heritage, ranging in age from 14 to 18 years in keeping with the age range in the school population. They were selected from students who were: in the 9th to 12th grade and who were in secure custody and detention within the facility; spending at least six-months in the institution; and a mix of second generation African Caribbean and immigrant youth.

The official archival records of the Youth Centre (Ontario School Records and other institutional records) provide demographic profiles of youths' family constructs and residential localities, their school and their criminal involvement in the community that may have contributed to their incarceration. Information gleaned from these official records fell into three categories:

- a. Home and family related social history: intra-family relationships, family dysfunctionality, socio-economic and employment status, residential location, migration and transplantation experiences, etc.
- b. Schooling history: academic and social progress; psychological assessment and special education placements, behaviour dysfunctionality, alternative school placements, etc.
- c. Community functioning: information related to offences committed under the Young Offenders Act; involvement with such service providers as Children's Aid Society (CAS), probation and the courts, social workers, the police.

From the documented history of these African-Caribbean boys in this study emerged a profile of frequent suspensions from school because of disobedience and non-conformism to classroom expectations, opposition to school authority, and physical confrontations and fighting in school.

In the community these youth continued to engage in delinquent and non-conformist behaviours such as stealing, drug possession, physical confrontations, and eventually coming to the attention of law enforcement agencies and subsequently being incarcerated in secure custody institutions such as Hopeful Village Youth Centre. Reasons for incarceration were summarized as unmanageable and dysfunctional behaviours in the home, deviant and counter-school activities in school, and delinquent and law-breaking behaviours in the community.

Missing from the above official documentation is the participants' own perceptions of their reality. This study was designed to access the boys' oral life histories which may contradict the official version of significant events in their lives. What emerge from this study are two scripts: the "official" as documented above and the "unofficial" self-report of the boys' lived experiences. We try to "make sense" of these contradictory perspectives and theorize about the power relations that mediate these realities.

The methodological approach used in this study provided insights into students' lived experiences in schools and communities leading up to their incarceration. Lang & van des Molan, with Trower and Look (1990) and Linde (1981), suggest that by accepting informants' oral history and by encouraging them to put their thoughts into words the researcher can form a picture of their experiential world; the role of institutions and organizations in shaping the experiences of the informants. In this study the oral history focused specifically on the school and community dimensions of the informants' lives. Data collection was ongoing and accumulative. Themes emerging in the early stages were used as a basis for further exploration at subsequent "rap sessions" between the researcher and informants. This process of identifying common themes is what Polkinghorne (1993) terms "paradigmatic analysis." The principles of "constant comparative" method (Strauss, 1987) provided an approach whereby initial data from early informants generated probe questions for subsequent dialogues. The new data helped to strengthen emerging patterns and helped formulate generalizations. The findings that emerged from the study provided subjective views of authority structures and their arbitrary use of power in institutional settings.

Findings

The findings of this study revealed that participants believed in the official achievement ideology and upward mobility in Canadian society through schooling. But, from the perspective of the students, racial discrimination and negative authority relations in the schooling process became an obstacle to academic achievement. Further, police intervention in the schooling of black youth sets up a "pipeline" that leads to incarceration in secure custody institutions.

Belief in education for upward mobility

Black students' desire for education was often instilled in them by parents whose migration to Canada was to provide better life opportunities for themselves and their children. "A good education is the key to life," was one mother's motto. The following excerpts reflect the general feeling about education in the students' lives.

Brian: When I leave this institution, [Hopeful Village] I am going to deal seriously with school. Then I am going to try and make it to college and do one year of college and try to get into university to do some business courses so that I can open up a little business for myself. I notice that when you work for people you don't get paid much, so I'd like to open up my own business even if it is hard at the start, eventually it will pick up.

John: When I get out of here [Hopeful Village] I am going back to school, and finish high school, then go to

Shaka College. My dad went there and studied electrical work. So I think I'll go to the same college and take it from there.

David concludes, "I'm going to try and find somewhere that I can get my education. I'm going to bring home certificates to make my mother happy."

These narratives indicate students' belief in secondary and post-secondary schooling as their "ticket" to a productive life in Canadian society. They regard their academic success as happiness for their parents. They perceive their incarceration as only a temporary setback to the achievement of their academic goals. The findings that follow describe their perceptions of racial discrimination within schools and police intervention that bolsters institutional authority structures.

Students' perception of racial discrimination

An emerging theme in this study was students lived experiences within racism, the antagonistic relationship this created between school authority and themselves, and the potential impact on their academic achievement. Such perception was often generated from the differential treatment accorded black and white students in areas of surveillance and monitoring within the school and exclusion from school. The following narratives reflect these perceptions:

Brian: I fought with a guy and the principal gave me twenty days suspension. I am saying to myself, twenty days - that is very long. That's a lot of days missing [school] and they know that twenty days from school and I am not going to be able to pass [my year]. I am also saying to myself, why? Because two white youths in my class fought; they beat up one kid and they got only five days suspension. And then the teacher offered to give them [school]work to do at home. But me, they didn't offer me any. When I went to the school to ask them for schoolwork they refused and told me that I am not supposed to be on school property. I was saying, "Well, that's life." This happens to me all the time, so I'm used to it. I cared, but I didn't care because nothing's going to change anyway.

Tom: I got suspended one time for touching the glue without asking [the teacher]. We were doing art and I went to the back of the class and picked up the glue and brought it back to my table and started using it, and the teacher said, "Why did you touch the glue without asking?" I was then sent to the office and got two days suspension for that.

Dissatisfaction with the principal's handling of his suspension was also expressed by Tom in this way: "The principal would not even say anything to me. He just told me to sit down and said, 'I am calling your mother and you are suspended.' He wouldn't even ask me what happened or nothing."

David: I was suspended lots of time for the simplest thing. There were white kids that were involved, but I never seen them get suspended. There weren't many black kids in school then anyway. The school was in a mostly a white neighbourhood. It was so hard because they didn't really look at me as someone that was gonna go anywhere. They think that I was a trouble-maker, so they just thought, "Okay, he's not really here to learn in school so what's the point of us helping him?" They just said, "Here's your work, do your work." When I asked for help, they would never come and help me, really. I was basically an outcast in the school.

The narratives capture the extent of the social and authority relations within their schools. First, they express dissatisfaction with the arbitrary use of suspensions and additionally, its differential use based on race. Second, the school's geographical location within a predominantly white neighbourhood and the limited number of black students in attendance gave the feeling of isolation and marginalization. Finally, and most importantly, are the boys' perceived status within the social and academic structure of the school. David's label as "trouble-maker" who does not take school seriously mediated the teaching-learning process; the pedagogical approach was perceived as one-directional and non-transactional.

As Oakes (1985) and Anyon (1987) argue, schools engage in differential socialization of students based on their track placement, race, ethnicity and socio-economic status. Working-class, low track racial minority students tend to be schooled in a coercive and punitive environment. Such schooling, they conclude, prepare students for different stations in the socio-economic structure. Surveillance and monitoring increase these students' dissatisfaction with the schooling process. For example, consider James' experience:

The school gave me a lock for my locker. They wouldn't let me put my own lock on. When I put my lock on they wanted the combination. They used to go through my locker all the time. I come in on Monday morning and my locker is ransacked, turned upside down, papers all over the place.

Many students perceive their experiences of arbitrary and differential treatment to be discriminatory and punitive. Peter explains:

I was walking in the hallway going to the washroom. Then one teacher saw me and dragged me down to the principal's office saying that I was skipping class. She said, "Look at him, he has nothing, no books or anything. He is skipping last period." Then they called my teacher and he told them that he had given me permission to go to the washroom. The teacher who dragged me down to the office had to say sorry. But I know that she still

hates me.

There have been arbitrary suspensions for being in the hallway, even with the permission of the teacher, for the type of dress they wear and for interacting with their friends. Harvey explains:

I am walking in the hallways sometimes and the principal would pull me over and bring me straight down to the office and tell me that I am not going back to my class. He would suspend me for a day or two for that. He doesn't even ask my teacher if I had permission to be out in the hallway. He just went straight ahead and suspended me. He would pick on me for different reasons. Like, if I am talking to my friends, he'll come over and start saying some stuff like we can't do this and can't do that, or we can't dress like this. And they would suspend me for that reason. Like, we can't roll up our pant legs, or we can't put our pants in our socks, or we can't wear our shirts inside out.

James: I went to a different high school, thinking that it would be all right because it is a new school, new principal and everything. When I went there the principal knew every charge that I had on my record; everything. So right off the bat I knew things weren't going to work. I tried anyway, and got four credits first semester. But when second semester came around things started to get rough. They started putting me on some *Tracking Sheet*³ for no reason.

Such intense monitoring of black life in schools is consistently documented in the research literature (Carby, 1982; Gillborn, 1988; Sewell, 1997a & 1997b; Solomon, 1992). As a response to such authority structure students label teachers as "judgemental, vindictive, wicked, mean, authoritarian, prejudiced, racists, "crooked" [dishonest], and "scheming" [conspiratorial]" (Solomon, 1992:52).

Police intervention into schooling

"They [the police] behave just like the principal; always on your case," says Harvey.

The data revealed collusion between the authority structure of the school and law enforcement agents in dealing with black youth. From student narratives such an intervention was coercive, punitive and often humiliating.

James: One day I skipped a class and went to the Mall and when I came back in the afternoon the principal came to my class and said that he wanted to speak with me. When I came out of the class, two police officers held me, put me up against the lockers, handcuffed me and carried me through the school the long way, so that when the bell rang everybody in the school saw me. Actually, they took me to the office that is in the front of the school, close to where the students wait for their buses. The police took me and stood in front of the office. One officer stood there and held me. At the same time all the students were lining up to take their buses and they kept asking me, "What happen, what happen, what did you do?" The whole school had seen me.⁴

Other studies have also implicated the police as an extension of, or supplement to the school's discipline machine (Ayers et al., 2001; Carby, 1982; Solomon, 1992). Such interventions are potentially damaging to the reputation of schools' ability to maintain an independent authority structure. Students may perceive such relinquishing of its responsibility for maintaining control as a serious loss of power. Even more damaging in the long run is the negative social relations that are being incubated in the school between black youth and the police.

The study also revealed a continuity of police surveillance and interrogation of black youth from the school into the community. Student narratives express fear, dislike and open antagonism toward the police. The following excerpts represent the general feeling of the informants in the study:

Brian: I fought with a white guy who was bigger than me. But I got charged. My mom called the police and asked them to charge the guy I fought with. The police were acting like they did not want to charge the guy for what he did to me. It seems like the police wanted me badly. They kept on asking kids in the community, "Does Brian do anything to you guys? Does Brian take any money from you?" So now I go to court and got convicted for assault, right? And since all this time we know that the [white] youth still hasn't been charged. So then the police are on my case, on my back, every little thing, like trying to cause problems for me. I'm riding my bike, they'll go, "Oh, where did you get that bike?" Like I'm some big criminal

Brian feels that, apart from police and school-related incidents, he has not experienced racism from other individuals or agencies in the community.

Tom fears the police and claims that no one in his neighbourhood likes them:

My neighbours, a couple houses away from my mom's friend, her husband is like a drug dealer or something and the police came to his house and physically assaulted him and his grandmother. They took him to a cemetery and beat him up. And you know, they also assaulted his wife and his grandmother for no reason. They took him to jail and that was it

Tom continues to express his fears and perception of police racism.

I don't know what's going on, but if I look out my window, I'll see two police officers chasing a black guy, or a guy on the sidewalk being beaten by a police officer for no reason. The way it looks, if I don't move out of this neighbourhood I'm not going to live that long or last that long. I know that when I get older like them, the police are gonna do the same thing to me as they do to these people.

Peter sees the police as being on his case constantly. He gives the following example:

One time I went behind a Budget [rent-a-car] parking lot to urinate, right? Somebody must have seen me and called the police. The police came and took me down to the station. But nothing was wrong with any of the cars 'cause I didn't touch any of them. So all that time [spent at the police station] for nothing.

Harvey expressed his dislike for the police based on his perception that the police constantly harass people. In fact, he compares the police with his school principal with whom he had a physical confrontation and by whom he was charged and finally convicted and sent to Hopeful Village Youth Centre.

Harvey: I don't really like them [police]. They behave like the principal; always on your case. But the police behave even worse. They handle you in a different way. Like if you don't tell them this or that, they will start beating you up for not telling them what they want to hear. And I don't like that.

In this section we provided the informants' perspectives on the police overzealous intervention into the lives of blacks in their communities. Such perception of over-policing was viewed with contempt as the boys interpret these acts as attempts to intimidate and criminalize them. The issue of criminalizing youth has been a matter of much debate within black communities, commissioned studies and in the research literature (Gittens et al. 1995; Wordes and Bynum, 1995; Wordes, Bynum and Corley, 1994). In the next section we theorize about the outcome of schooling for black youth in rigid, authoritarian school structures.

When "racial profiling" and "zero tolerance" converge

The reflective voices of black youth in a secure custody institution raise serious questions about race and public schooling in multiracial societies. These narratives depict schools as repressive, coercive, undemocratic, authoritarian and racist. The outcome of such racist schooling for black students was often removal from the mainstream and placement in alternative institutions where opportunities for full and free participation in societal life is seriously diminished.

What is the process for such marginalization? First, black students respond to undemocratic and coercive schooling in many ways. Conflict theorists often locate students' counter school behaviours within a socio-political context; schools become contested terrains in the struggle between the dominant and the marginalized over power and control (Collins, 1974; Bowles & Gintis, 1976). Black youth creatively utilize a potent mix of ethno-specific forms of behaviour, popular youth culture, and aspects of their institutional life to create a vibrant counter culture (Foster, 1986; Furlong, 1984; Marotto, 1977; Solomon, 1992).

Even more detrimental to the youths' futures are the labels that lead to incarceration in secure custody institutions. The escalating negative spiral between authoritarian practices and students' resistance to them lead to "time out" at the principal's office, detention, in-school suspension, short term suspension, long term suspension, and finally, interventions by the criminal justice system. Here, the youth is faced with a new cadre of system agents: the police, the crown and legal counsel, the judiciary, probation officers, community workers, and eventually, institutional workers "behind bars." The nature and intensity of these involvements in the lives of the youths are well documented in their school records and clinical files analyzed for this study.

To what extent are our informants' perceptions of the authority structure of the school and police intervention corroborated by other research? For our response, we analyzed the results of three landmark Canadian studies. The first is the Report of the Commission on systemic racism in the Ontario Criminal Justice System that explores the practices, procedures and policies of three major components of the system: the police, the courts and correctional institutions (Gittens, et al. 1995). Perceptions, experiences and outcomes of the justice process were found to closely reflect the perceptions and experiences of the black youths at Hopeful Village Youth Centre. Regarding racial discrimination in community policing the report concluded:

Perceptions that the police discriminate against black and other racialized people are widespread. A Commission survey shows that 74% of Black, 54% of Chinese, and 47% of White Metropolitan Toronto residents believe that the police do not treat Black people the same as white people. About nine in ten of those who perceive differential treatment believe the police treat black people worse than white people, and more than seven in ten think it occurs about half the time or more. (Gittens et al. 1995: ix)

Regarding policing and school discipline, the Report found school authority complicitous in the differential policing of black students in schools: "Some schools are quick to summon the police when black lives are alleged perpetrators of harmful or inappropriate behaviour, but are more likely to handle similar behaviour by white students or other racialized students

internally" (Gittens et al. 1995: 361).

The second study also relates to the judiciary and its dealing with black youth and the police. In an unprecedented turn of events, a black female judge in the province of Nova Scotia, Canada, based on her understanding of a racist society and her personal experience of the social reality in Nova Scotia, acquitted a black, 15 year old boy of all charges brought against him by a white police officer. In her summative remarks she concluded, "Police officers had been known to mislead the court in the past, and they had been known to overreact particularly with non-white groups, and that would indicate a questionable state of mind" (Supreme Court of Canada, 1997: 6). Such a position was challenged by the police and crown attorney on the ground of a "reasonable apprehension of bias." Through a series of appeals her judgement was upheld by the Supreme Court of Canada. This ruling signalled, for the first time, the possibility of assigning credibility to black youth and their experience of racist subordination in Canadian society.

A more recent study: *Paying the price: The human cost of racial profiling*, by the Ontario Human Rights Commission (2003), concludes:

Racial profiling is a form of racial discrimination. As racial profiling exists in [Canadian] society, it also exists in institutions such as law enforcement agencies, the education system, the criminal justice system etc., which are a microcosm of broader society. (p. 13)

The report moved beyond proof of existence of racial profiling to point to those most likely to engage in the practice, people in positions of authority who "may consciously or unconsciously exercise power differently when dealing with racialized persons" (p. 8). The most important message in this report is the negative psychological, physical, social and economic cost of racial profiling on racial minority individuals and communities.

Recent media reports have provided insights into the ways Black students are differentially impacted by zero tolerance policies. For example, the CBC broadcast: *Zero tolerance: The colour of zero tolerance (Morrison 2002)*, revealed that although safe schools policies are supposed to be "colour-blind," there is blatant differential treatment of Black and White students in punishment of behaviours defined by safe schools policies as disrespectful, disruptive and violent. The *Toronto Star's* article (March 18, 2003): *Blacks don't have a margin of error*, confirms other reports that students of colour are disproportionately suspended and expelled for behaviours deemed unacceptable by safe schools standards.

Beyond media reports, sustained research, as referenced in this study, has shown that in multiracial school systems black students invariably become victims of zero tolerance policies. Such studies revealed that black students are monitored, accosted, reprimanded, suspended and expelled more often than their non-black colleagues. There appears to be a discourse of fear of black people among white teachers. Such "Negrophobia" mediates the relationship between black students (especially black boys) and white. Some critics believe that teachers and school administrators strategically utilize zero tolerance policies to cleanse their institutions of the racial differences they fear (Ayers et al. 2001; Sewell, 1997a & 1997b; Solomon and Brown, 1998; Dei, et al. 1997). Consequently, this socially and pedagogically unproductive relationship between black youth and the schools' authority structure results in disrupted schooling and the eventual dropping out (or being pushed out) of school without the education to make them contributing members of Canadian society.

In this study the convergence of racial profiling of black youth and a policy of zero tolerance that disproportionately penalizes them has created a well-beaten pathway from school to incarceration in a secure custody institution such as Hopeful Village Youth Centre (See Table 1)

Table 1	
The outcomes of a rigid authority structure and racial profiling	
<p>Rigid authority/discipline structure</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * zero tolerance policies in school * mandatory predetermined punishment for disruptive behavior * police intervention into disciplinary process 	<p>Racial profiling</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Blacks as stereotyped and pathologized as anti-authoritarian * Differential discipline based on race * disproportionate school drop-out/push-out rates among Blacks
<p>...contribute to...</p>	
<p>Negative community engagements</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * unsupervised suspensions (from school) in the community * non-conformity and delinquent activities in the community * perceived racism in law enforcement and over-policing of Black communities 	
<p>...which contribute to...</p>	
<p><i>Incarceration in secure custody institutions</i></p>	

This movement of students is what Skiba et al. (2003) describe as "the school-prison pipeline." From their U.S. study of race, expulsion and incarceration they conclude: "There is evidence of a clear relationship between school suspension and juvenile incarceration; ...[and] these relationships are by no means race neutral...racial disparities in school discipline and corrections

are in fact related" (pp. 17, 28-29). This study also suggests that school principals' beliefs and perspectives on discipline influence their practice: those who believe in zero tolerance have higher suspension rates than those with contrasting perspectives on school discipline. In the next section we explore ways of disrupting the inequitable flow of black youth through the school-prison pipeline.

Disrupting the "school-prison pipeline"

How then may the school's authority structure be reconstituted to make it more equitable for racialized youth, especially black youth? What roles and responsibilities may law enforcement agents have in the lives of black youth in their school and community? How may schools develop social formations where Blacks have rights, privileges and responsibilities equal to those of their white counterparts?

Traditionally, some school personnel operate on what King (1991) interprets as "dysconscious racism", that is "an uncritical habit of mind (including perceptions, attitudes, assumptions, and beliefs) that justifies inequity and exploitation by accepting the existing order of things as given" (p. 135). According to King and others, white teachers' privileged location within a race-stratified society provides them skewed perceptions, subjective orientations and flawed practices in their pedagogy. The findings of this study are an indication that the pedagogical practices of school personnel are predicated on assumptions about social difference; in this case, black youth and their perceived sub-cultural behaviours that induce fear and require rigidity in discipline.

To tackle this "uncritical habit of mind," school personnel need to distance themselves from prescriptive, authoritative responses to discipline, and engage instead in critical reflective practice. They need to develop the analytic skills and the moral authority to apply such skills in disassembling preconceived notions about black students. As we have uncovered in this study, student resistance to perceived racism was too often interpreted as cultural deficit or social deviance; a pathological rather than a political response. Valencia (1997) connects these interpretations to the deficit mentality theory and ideology embraced by those in positions of power and authority as "a shift of blame from the structural deficits" to that of blaming the victim (p.x). Since educators' professional development historically over-emphasized technical knowledge at the expense of developing intuitive understanding of social difference, a more social justice based teacher education model must be developed. The inadequacies in educators' conceptions about race must be transformed, and the dialogical construction of meaning instituted. But given the ideological locations of race and other forms of social difference in social, political and historical contexts, and the white privileges attached to such locations, teacher educators will be challenged to effect change. Evaluative studies carried out in Britain (Gillborn, 1995; Troyna, 1993), the U.S. (Cochran-Smith, 1995, Sleeter, 1992), and Canada (Carr & Klassen, 1997; Solomon and Levine-Rasky, 1996), have revealed that pre-service and in-service teachers mount tremendous resistance to the inclusion of antiracism pedagogy in their practice. Antiracism is the theory-practice discourse that interrogates the socio-historical context of race, class and gender, and develops strategies to make life equitable for oppressed, marginalized and dehumanized groups. Its goal is to eradicate racism, an ideology and practice that has undermined, disenfranchised, disadvantaged, and marginalized people of colour and other oppressed groups. Unlike multiculturalism that is often preoccupied with cultural identity projects, antiracism addresses the imbalances experienced by those affected by racist ideologies, policies and practices. Teacher educators are therefore left with the urgent project of integrating antiracism scholarship and practices into their pedagogies.

Transformative antiracism teacher education will help educators move beyond the discourse of fear. To understand the deleterious effects of fear of social difference on their pedagogy educators should reflect on possible outcomes. First, fear of black students may adversely affect teachers' social relationships with these students, curriculum content, instructional strategies, evaluative procedures and cross-race conflict mediation and solution. Foster's (1986) concern that images of black violence in urban settings accompanied by racist fantasies may result in the manipulation of behaviour and academic standards for black students. This constitutes the most insidious form of racism, he concluded.

Second, the paralysis of fear causes educators to relinquish their power and authority to an external force: law enforcement agents. Such relocation may be perceived by students as a weakness in school authority structure, an inability to cope adequately with the affairs of the school. Marginalized students may exploit this power vacuum and institute the kind of power that may destabilize the regularities of the school. Since the external imposition of power and control is not emancipatory or democratic for schools or their students any transformative work must be generated from within. The project of antiracism education, therefore, is to promote social reconstruction within schools and to respect the political and power sharing capacities of Blacks and other marginalized students.⁵ This should be the starting point for preparing students for democratic citizenship in the larger society. Paulo Freire's (1996) model is instructive here. In his work: *Pedagogy of the oppressed*, he outlined the process for empowering the marginalized who struggle for voice and meaning in society; interaction that is dialogic; not one that fosters the top-down imposition of knowledge and social practices.

Finally, how do we get "Babylon" out of schools? The policy and practice of police intervention into schools must be contested and re-examined on moral and legal grounds. Such intrusions have consistently trampled unabatedly on the rights of racialized groups. Concerns of school authority over violence in schools and the urgency to create "safe schools" have given administrators considerable freedom in summoning police intervention into the lives of students. Gittens et al. (1995) *Report of the Commission on systemic racism in the Ontario criminal justice system*, concludes:

Safety in schools is obviously a vital issue, and the criminal process is sometimes an appropriate response to student behaviour. But the criminal law should be used with restraint so that "zero-tolerance" does not become a vehicle for over-criminalization of students. During the Commission's consultations across Ontario, many black

youths and their parents voiced serious concerns that neither schools nor the police are exercising restraint. They said the police are often summoned for trivial incidents that schools once handled internally. (p. 351)

While the Commission recommends that schools inform parents and youths about school policing issues, we strongly suggest that black students and their parents become integral participants in the development and implementation of any policy that potentially restricts their rights and responsibilities as citizens in a democracy. The advent of school councils as an essential component of governance could readily facilitate the inclusion of community voices in the formulation of policies and procedures that control police intervention in the schooling process. For example, Ayers et al. (2001) suggest that marginalized groups on councils develop a network of legally-minded advisers to provide advice and represent students and parents on matters of due process and human rights.

To conclude, for black youth to become responsible citizens in western democratic societies, schools as socializing institutions must be liberating and empowering. In other words, Noguera (2003) suggests that schools need to invest in the "social capital" of youth and create a caring, trusting environment that provides a feeling of belonging. Blacks must be afforded equal rights and responsibilities and equal opportunity to exercise them. For schools to produce informed, critical thinkers in a non-prejudiced, undifferentiated way, educators must set upon the painful project of unshackling themselves from the restrictive attitudes, assumptions and beliefs about the "racial other." This act will go a long way in disrupting the flow of black youth through the "school-prison pipeline."

Endnotes

1 A version of the paper was first presented at the American Educational Research Association (AERA) Annual Meeting, San Diego, April, 1998

2 The term "racialized minority" more accurately reflects the power relationship in the labelling process than the traditional descriptor "racial minority." In racially diverse societies such as Canada the dominant (white) group imposes labels or markers for those who are racially different than whites. The process of "racializing" or "minoritizing" carries the effect of 'marking' or "positioning" group status and social difference. In this article "racial minority" and "racialized minority" will be used interchangeably.

3 The *Tracking Sheet* is a monitoring device used by school personnel to verify the whereabouts of students. The sheet, carried by students, will indicate whether or not students are legitimately out-of- bounds during the school day.

4 School administrators who do not collude in the humiliation of racialized minority youth provide insights into police differential treatment of black youth. For example, when non-black kids are caught shoplifting they are often picked up by school personnel or taken home by the police and released to their parents. On the other hand, when black kids are caught shoplifting, they are often escorted back to school in marked cruisers and released in the custody of the principal. If the school principal feels disinclined to accept this responsibility, the youth is taken to the police station for processing. This example provides insights into how black youths are differentially treated by the law enforcement agents and how school authority may collude in this process

5 An innovative system of student governance that is currently being built into authority structures in some secondary schools is an advisory group to the principal representing the racial, cultural and ethnic diversity of the school. Such a group functions independently of the student council but often collaborate with them on whole-school projects where the interests of non-mainstream students have to be represented.

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