Combating Colonized Discipline Practices:
If Leaders Know Better, Will They Do Better?

Monique Matute-Chavarria
https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9086-3429
New Mexico State University, USA

Monica R. Brown
https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8011-7772
University of Nevada, Las Vegas, USA

Pricella Morris
https://orcid.org/0009-0001-7309-7566
University of Nevada, Las Vegas, USA

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As students in schools have become more diverse, the teacher and leadership demographic has stayed predominantly White and female. Because of the cultural shifts in education, school leaders are asked to consider whether the old social norms regarding behavior are still suitable for all students. This case examines the social (i.e., White) norms of behavior and one school's attempt to decolonize discipline. Teachers and school leaders are encouraged to push back against the policies and practices that have created inequity in the educational system.

INTRODUCTION

Classrooms in the U.S. are run on a set of social norms. Those social norms have guided individual student behavior for centuries (Veenstra et al., 2018). Unfortunately, when those norms were adopted, the student population was less diverse than it is today. The teachers and students back then were predominantly White, so there was no need to question them. They (i.e., White people) created the norms based on how they believed an individual should behave in school. However, as the student population has become more diverse, school personnel (i.e., leaders) must consider whether those norms are acceptable or applicable to all students. Instead, they should consider a student's cultural markers (i.e., race and disability) when assessing their behavior. If that student is not White, perhaps what is "the norm" in terms of behaviors is not "the norm" for students who are minoritized because of their individual cultural markers (e.g., race, ethnicity, language, ability). When those behaviors are not the norm for students who are minoritized, how do teachers and school leaders interpret those behaviors? Also, what happens when students do not conform to the established social norms of behavior? If school leaders and teachers have not reflected carefully on such questions, the behaviors of students from minoritized backgrounds, specifically Black boys, risk being misunderstood.

Teachers often view black boys as "bad" or "troublemakers" (Wright & Counsell, 2018). Black boys are also considered older and less childlike (Bryan, 2017; Hines et al., 2022). For example, Goff et al. (2014) found that Black children were seen as 4.5 years older than they were. Moreover, Black boys' behaviors are less likely to be seen as innocent (Bryan et al., 2022) and more likely to be seen as dangerous and monstrous (Bryan, 2022). These perceptions adultify and dehumanize Black boys (Dumas & Nelson, 2016). These stigmatized views of Black boys can lead to the development of a negative self-identity (Wright & Counsell, 2018) and can be largely attributed to the implicit and explicit bias regarding Black boys' behavior in schools (Bryan, 2022). Moreover, these ideas and practices perpetuate continued stereotypes and stigmas that lead to Black boys receiving harsher punishments and consequences for simply existing.

Teachers often anticipate misbehavior in Black children, specifically Black boys (Gilliam et al., 2016). This anticipation or bias has contributed to Black boys being three to five times more likely to experience expulsion or suspension beginning as early as preschool (Gilliam et al., 2016). Moreover, according to Skiba et al. (2011), Black children in elementary school are more than twice as likely to receive a disciplinary referral as their White peers. This disparity increases in middle school, where Black students are more than four times as likely to receive such referrals.

Administrators are the final decision-makers regarding student punishment for disciplinary referrals in schools. When they suspend or expel Black children for

Related Content

Mining Repetitive Patterns in Multimedia Data
Junsong Yuan (2009). *Encyclopedia of Data Warehousing and Mining, Second Edition (pp. 1287-1291).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/mining-repetitive-patterns-multimedia-data/10988

Data Mining in Protein Identification by Tandem Mass Spectrometry
Haipeng Wang (2009). *Encyclopedia of Data Warehousing and Mining, Second Edition (pp. 472-478).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/data-mining-protein-identification-tandem/10862

Utilizing Fuzzy Decision Trees in Decision Making
Malcolm J. Beynonm (2009). *Encyclopedia of Data Warehousing and Mining, Second Edition (pp. 2024-2030).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/utilizing-fuzzy-decision-trees-decision/11097

Robust Face Recognition for Data Mining
Brian C. Lovell, Shaokang Chenand Ting Shan (2009). *Encyclopedia of Data Warehousing and Mining, Second Edition (pp. 1689-1695).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/robust-face-recognition-data-mining/11045

Data Mining Lessons Learned in the Federal Government
Les Pang (2009). *Encyclopedia of Data Warehousing and Mining, Second Edition (pp. 492-496).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/data-mining-lessons-learned-federal/10865