CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Attempting to understand the complexities of classroom management is indeed an arduous task. Students must be placed at the center of our efforts to build a classroom that optimizes their learning opportunities while maintaining important aspects of their beings. We must understand how students live both inside and outside of school. We must also problematize what we mean by "appropriate" and "normal" behavior. Like knowledge construction, students' behavioral practices and patterns are constructed on the basis of social and cultural conditions and realities. Thus, we must work to understand how students' social and cultural experiences influence what they do, what they choose not to do, and how they conduct themselves in the classroom. Moreover, teachers must understand that what *they* perceive as appropriate behavior is also socially and subjectively constructed. Teachers bring their own views, preferences, and insights into interpreting student behavior and also in setting their expectations for what is and is not acceptable in a classroom environment.

As mentioned, we have consistently heard teachers in different social contexts across the United States (and for at least two of us in other parts of the world) who lament, "These kids are out of control." We hope readers embrace the idea that students should be out of the control of adults—including educators. We should not pursue practices of control over other people. Students are not to be controlled—they are not wild, dangerous animals. Thus, when teachers stress that students are "out of control," they should do so with relief.

However, we understand that what many educators mean when they talk about students and control is that their classroom environments are not conducive to optimal teaching and learning opportunities. We have stressed the necessity for educators to co-construct with students (and families) classroom contexts that bolster student identity and learning. Classroom environments where students feel safe, motivated, and engaged—not controlled—are places where they are intellectually curious, allowed to take risks, and see themselves explicitly reflected in the curriculum and instructional practices of the space.

Additionally, classroom management must involve more than a focus on student behavior. On one hand, we must be aware of the multiple and varied experiences among students and the inconsistencies that exist between them and their teachers. However, we must not stereotype, generalize, and reify incorrect assumptions and misconceptions about students and teachers. To do so would contradict the very essence of this book. We must understand

that students bring into the classroom knowledge, expertise, brilliance, and a set of experiences that must be drawn from and incorporated in the very fabric of the classroom. Building on students' prior knowledge, including how they have been taught to behave in the past, is essential in developing skills to ensure success. For instance, as Dillard (2000) stressed, students of color are not White people with pigmented skin. Their experiences are shaped by and framed by their race. But at the same time, teachers must recognize that they are teaching individual raced people.

Students and parents must bear some responsibility for student behavior in classrooms. In like form, teachers, administrators, policymakers, and teacher education programs must also carry some of the responsibility. Clearly, there needs to be some collaboration and effort on the part of many to provide optimal learning opportunities for students. As we have discussed, developing parental and community alliances can be essential in supporting students' academic and social success. To do so, teachers must demystify and break down barriers that may exist between schools and families. Intimidation parents may feel from schooling structures can disrupt parental and community partnership that can be central to developing strategies to help students understand what Delpit (1995) has described as a culture of power in the classroom.

Indeed, when students are not in the classroom—that is, when they are sent out of the classroom for punishment reprimands—they do not have access to opportunities to learn. This inaccessibility to curriculum and instructional opportunities is dangerous and needs to be seriously considered because students are missing important learning opportunities. Monroe and Obidah (2004) wrote that "teachers who address inappropriate conduct in the classroom without relying on formal procedures, such as office referrals, may enable their students to avoid detrimental effects associated with recurrent disciplinary action" (p. 266). With this in mind, we conclude and offer the following recommendations for different, and equally important, constituents involved in the educational enterprise.

A CHARGE TO TEACHER EDUCATION

Many teacher education programs across the United States still do not have courses that deeply and sustainably address race, justice, and urban education—not to mention urban classroom management. This is a programmatic void that needs to be filled (Matus, 1999) if we are committed to supporting teachers to build the types of classroom environments with students that maximize student potential. According to Weinstein et al. (2004), "A lack of multicultural competence can exacerbate the difficulties that novice teachers (and even more experienced teachers) have with classroom management" (p. 26). Teacher education must help teachers and future teachers pose tough questions about classroom management for the sake of all students

(Milner, 2003; Milner & Smithey, 2003). There needs to be a linking of context, content, and classroom management practices to better support teacher learning and development.

It is imperative that teachers understand that

> children must learn (and be taught) the culture of the classroom in order for them to effectively participate in learning . . . if the children understand and learn the appropriate expected behaviors for different classroom contexts, communication and interaction between the teacher and students should increase. (Garibaldi, 1992, pp. 26–27)

But we are suggesting that students should actually be involved in this classroom culture construction and not be told or expected to simply adhere to cultural norms set by a teacher.

In addition, some teachers may still enter some classrooms secretly afraid of the students "because . . . [they have] never known anyone who looked, talked, or acted like [their students]" (Weiner, 1993, p. 119). The manners by which teachers interpret student behavior in classrooms have the potential to guide and mitigate learning, and teacher education needs to be on the front line in helping teachers understand that they must not fear their students and must instead see and embrace the very humanity of them.

Weinstein et al. (2004) wrote,

> Teacher educators and researchers interested in classroom management must begin to make cultural diversity an integral part of the conversation. We need to ask whether diversity requires different approaches to classroom management, to examine the kinds of cultural conflicts that are likely to arise in ethnically diverse classrooms, and to consider the best ways to help preservice [and practicing] teachers become multiculturally competent. (p. 27)

In short, teacher education must help teachers develop the skills, knowledge, attitudes, beliefs, thinking, practices, and dispositions to teach all students effectively. We cannot expect teachers to build these critical aspects of teaching without support from teacher education (preservice and in-service). Conceivably, teachers who feel efficacious about their abilities to perform in a context are much more likely to persist—even in the midst of adversity. Teacher education programs are critical in this regard. Students need and deserve competent and committed teachers. And teachers deserve working environments where they feel safe and confident to teach all their students successfully.

A CHARGE TO RESEARCHERS

Obviously, we need to know more about classroom management in all schools. There simply are not enough studies on this pressing topic, particularly

studies that problematize what classroom management actually is and those that frame classroom management as an equity imperative. Weiner (2003) declared, "One of the most serious obstacles to understand anything about urban schools is the lack of reliable data" (p. 306). Weinstein et al. (2004) posed several interrelated questions that might be an anchoring point in thinking about future research that really takes into consideration complexities associated with classroom management and justice. For instance, the researchers posed questions such as these:

> What types of cultural conflicts can arise in classrooms that might make it more difficult to have a safe, caring . . . environment? . . . What approaches are most appropriate when students in one particular classroom come from a variety of cultural backgrounds? . . . How can we sensitize our (mostly White, middle-class) teachers to their own biases, assumptions, and stereotypes so that they undergo genuine personal transformation rather than simply learning to mouth the socially appropriate responses? (pp. 35–36)

It is essential for researchers to conduct this research in classrooms, to make connections to teacher education, and to see with a cultural eye (Irvine, 2003), regardless of the research paradigm the researchers use (qualitative and quantitative studies alike are needed). Moreover, teachers themselves should be prepared to conduct research to examine their classrooms and to think about alternative and effective approaches to supporting students. As is the case for teachers who work in classrooms across the country, researchers cannot assume that their research is culturally and ethnically neutral (Milner, 2007). The nature of questions posed, the research design, instrumentation decisions, how the questions are posed, on behalf of whom, and to whom, and how data are analyzed and reported or represented are all issues embedded in one's worldview and positionality (Milner, 2007)—issues that have cultural and racial implications.

Jeff, a high school English teacher in Brown's (2003) study reminded us, "You're there to teach kids—not subjects! We often forget this point" (p. 278). In this same vein, researchers should craft their research projects and agendas in ways that build, broaden, and expand our knowledge about creating better learning contexts for *students* who experience classroom life. The point is that our research ought to inform practice for the sake of all children, and our research should be designed to respond to the very humanity of students. After all, we are studying people—human beings, not subjects or lab rats. Weiner (2003) declared,

> Because so little research has been done that examines a full range of contextual factors that influence urban schools and the

> classrooms within them, we have relatively little information that is confirmed by research about how the social context of the school and the social organization of the school itself influence urban teaching in general and classroom management in particular. (p. 307)

To date, research that looks specifically at classroom management with linguistically diverse students is limited. While there is a growing and meaningful body of literature focusing on English language learners and learning, the connections to classroom management are scarce. Still, Curran (2003) maintained, "A teacher's management decision-making process becomes even more complex when she or he doesn't speak the first language of students who are new to U.S. classrooms" (p. 334). Because a wide range of students enrolled in schools and classrooms are (and will be) from non-English-speaking countries, we need to know more about the linguistic diversity, needs, and perspectives these students bring into the classroom in order to develop a knowledge base about how best to build learning environments that support and enhance who they are and "reduce the likelihood for linguistic and cultural miscommunication and conflicts" (Curran, 2003, p. 334) in the classroom.

There is a great need for researchers to use new and more innovative research methods to more deeply conceptualize and analyze the central role of race in classroom management strategies, options, and decision making. Using critical race theory as an analytic and conceptual framework to explore how inequity manifests policy could elicit new and more profound insights. There are also important questions beyond policy that can shed light on practice. For instance, what role does race play in students' behavior practices and in teachers' interpretation of those practices? How do historical, social, cultural, and political constructions and experiences influence teacher and student interactions? In what ways do systemic, institutional, and legal policies and mandates shape the nature of schooling and educational experiences available to students? For example, how do property taxes shape the kinds of schools available to particular students, and how do these policies reproduce, enable, and maintain the status quo and inequity?

Research continues to forge forward on classroom management in classrooms, schools, and districts, but as a collective, more synergy is needed to build a more comprehensive knowledge base. In a recent review Milner (2014), the first author of this book, conducted on classroom management and urban environments, several themes emerged that could be used as sites to organize and advance what we know about classroom management for urban schools, in particular, through research, theory, practice, and policy: (a) teacher learning and teacher education; (b) teacher knowledge, beliefs, and emotions; (c) program and model evaluation and assessment; and (d) classroom practices. But these themes, to be clear, must center equity and justice as we work to build a more robust knowledge base.

Adapted from that review of the literature (Milner, 2014), we provide some general critiques of the research and scholarship and make some recommendations on the basis of those analyses to advance the field.

- In his chapter published in the first *Handbook of Classroom Management*, Milner (2006) pleaded for more studies with a concerted and concentrated focus on culture, race, and inequity. He reviewed literature both inside and outside of the field of classroom management in an attempt to cultivate and galvanize researchers to design studies that were explicitly equity focused. Much of that work focused on teacher thinking and instructional practices that were culturally centered to address classroom management challenges. Since then, there appears to be some emphasis on issues of equity, but certainly not a collective movement toward such a focus. Because so many more students attending urban schools are not having their needs met (Milner & Lomotey, 2014), again, researchers should design future studies that specifically focus on equity, posing research questions that attempt to get at the core of why students in these contexts are too often not successful.
- Although classroom management has a heavy emphasis on students in urban environments, much of the recent literature since 2006 has focused on teachers, not students. More studies are needed that focus on students. Providing insights about students on the basis of their test scores, suspension rates, or grades on report cards provides one level of evidence regarding students. Studies should also include student voices and observable behavior of students to provide triangulation between what students say and what researchers actually observe.
- Many studies do not define what they mean by "urban" environments or "urban" classroom management. Because this book is not only focused solely on urban education, a similar case can be made for other contexts, such as rural and suburban. Mentioning these sites without definition is problematic and does little to advance the field. This—the lack of definition work—is a serious problem and does not adequately allow the field to build knowledge about and spaces that carry similar contextual characteristics. Studies need to provide situational information that sheds light on how the researchers and those in the studies characterize and define environment. Who were the students in these environments? What were their racial and ethnic backgrounds? What material

and capital resources were available to them? What is the size of these environments?

- Most of the quantitative research studies did not focus much on the populations under study. In many studies reviewed, large scale studies do not provide enough descriptive statistics or data to make sense of the populations being examined. Studies that provide information such as "students in poverty" or "students on free and reduced-price lunch" only provide a basic, superficial level of information regarding students that do not provide a more complex picture of the identities of students in the studies. We need to know more—much more—about who the students (and teachers) were, the structures in place to support teachers, as well as what the authors mean by their use of the terms *urban, suburban*, and/or *rural*.
- In many cases, researchers did not define or conceptualize what was meant by "classroom management" itself. This lack of conceptualization is an additional definition absence issue that makes it difficult to build synergy between and among studies.
- Much of the large-scale, quantitative research does not reference or build on established theory or qualitative research in the field (or beyond) related to urban classroom management. This failure to build on previous studies leaves holes in the knowledge base regarding classroom management. Similarly, qualitative studies often do not build on findings from other related quantitative studies and leave similar absences in the knowledge base.
- Some researchers, especially in quantitative studies, misuse and inappropriately use terms like *at risk, urban, minority*, and *low income* when they are discussing students in studies on classroom management. This language use carries with it a deficit orientation. In other words, researchers approach the research context (i.e., urban, rural, suburban) and the people in it focused on what this community does not have or what it lacks rather than focusing in on what it actually has or possesses (their assets). Moreover, deficit descriptors are used to describe people rather than the unjust, inequitable structures and systems that underserve students, families, and communities and perpetuate the status quo.
- Many of the studies do not adequately review the established research literature, and many of them do not build on existing theory. In this way, many studies in the area are atheoretical

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and do not contribute much to theory building related to classroom management. More emphasis on theory building is important to contribute to the intellectual rigor of the field. Qualitative studies were more likely to incorporate theory, but even those studies tended to be thin on theory.

A CHARGE TO REFORMERS

Haberman (2000) explained that "urban educators who can control and manage their classrooms and schools are not removed simply because students are not learning" (p. 205). These teachers often are viewed as excellent teachers even though their students are not making academic progress. Certainly, we need to rethink these mindsets, which can result in policies that reward teachers whose accomplishments center on "controlling" students (who are quiet and docile) rather than propelling the voice and power of students. Besides, as we have stressed, classroom management involves much more than discipline and it should reject the control of others' bodies. Classroom management should be focused on increasing students' opportunities to learn and building spaces where students *want* to be and feel ownership within. Thus, reform efforts need to focus on supporting teachers to enhance student learning opportunities, not reward them for trying to control human beings.

Nieto (1994) stressed that true reform occurs when we listen to the experiences and voices of the students who are in a variety of schools. By interviewing a diverse group of successful junior and senior high school students, she learned of these students' struggles in schools but also came to understand the factors that enabled the students' persistence and success. In Nieto's view, reform has to include dialogue, perspectives and insights from students themselves. Where school reform is concerned, Nieto posited that "developing conditions in schools that let students know that they have a right to envision other possibilities beyond those imposed by traditional barriers of race, gender, or social class" (p. 422) was essential.

Irvine (1988) stressed that students' home environment cannot and should not be deterrents to thinking about optimal reform. She maintained that variables such as school quality, pedagogical materials and equipment, and characteristics of the teachers are integral to students' learning opportunities. Thus, reformers cannot escape systemic and structural responsibilities by insisting that so much is out of their hands. Reformers must take responsibility for the issues that are in their control (such as quality of schools, technology enhancements, curriculum materials, professional development of teachers, and instructional supports). In Irvine's words, "the fact that a child was on welfare and perhaps living in a single-parent home was never used as an excuse to justify a student's non-achievement" (p. 237) in reform efforts that were transformative for communities. Thus, reform movements must consider what is actually

possible as they work to create conditions where all students have an equitable opportunity to learn.

Irvine (1988) outlined several common characteristics among effective schools: (a) "visionary" leadership; (b) effective, relevant, and responsive instruction; (c) both rigid and flexible bureaucracy (where autonomy and flexibility are welcomed in some instances and strict, rigid administration is necessary in other instances, such as disciplinary policies and procedures to keep everyone safe); and (d) partnerships and collaboration with parents and community members. Thus, reform, particularly reform at the classroom level, is necessary and will prove beneficial not only for those attending and working in urban schools but all in a variety of contexts. As Hilliard (1992) explained, "any reform that benefits those students who are poorly served always works to the benefit of all" (p. 375).

A CHARGE TO TEACHERS AND OTHER EDUCATORS

Perhaps most important, we are hopeful that educators and especially teachers are energized to improve their practices and reimagine what classroom management might mean for them and their students. In the following table, we capture recommendations and themes that we have attempted to convey throughout this book.

Table of Classroom Management Recommendations in and for School Contexts

Summary of Classroom Management Recommendations
Teachers adopt learner lenses: Teachers do not assume that they know everything, and they deliberately and assertively learn about the life experiences of their students. They are researchers themselves and build the skills to consistently study the place of people in their work.
Engage in critical self-examination and reflection: Teachers engage in introspection that brings to the fore their own strengths, weaknesses, privileges, prejudice, and needs; teachers encourage students to engage in self-reflection; both groups work to examine how they contribute to creating a classroom climate of learning, development, care, analysis, and critique.
Work with students, families, and communities to understand the culture of power (and to challenge or change it): Teachers do not assume that students, families, and communities implicitly understand expectations and rules; teachers work with students to develop classroom norms explicitly. They facilitate opportunities to disrupt power structures that oppress in all the space.
Use accessible, relevant language: Teachers do not complicate expectations by using unclear and inaccessible language.
Student input, ownership, and contribution in expectations and rules: Teachers rely on, build on, and expect students to participate in classroom rules, expectations, and overall classroom community building.

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Summary of Classroom Management Recommendations
Caring and empathetic attitudes and dispositions: Teachers attempt to understand their students and work with them to solve problems rather than seeing students as the enemy. Teachers demonstrate their care by handling disciplinary and punishment measures inside of the classroom rather than sending students to the office.
Rejection of deficit thinking: Teachers believe that students are in fact knowledgeable and bring a wealth of knowledge and expertise into the classrooms; teachers see students as assets, not as problems.
Cultural and racial awareness and understanding: Teachers understand that students' experiences are shaped historically, socially, and politically; teachers connect to students' culture and race through curriculum, instructional, and assessment practices.
Avoid color-blind ideologies: Teachers recognize and acknowledge students' race as a central dimension of who students are; teachers attempt to know more complete students, not fragmented ones; teachers understand that students' race influence how they experience the world and the school.
The development and maintenance of trust: Teachers co-create a trusting environment where students feel cared for and about. They believe in their students and give them multiple opportunities to succeed, and most important, trust is constructed when teachers allow students to take risks without fear of failure and repercussion.
Family and community partnerships: Teachers recognize that there is strength in building and maintaining partnerships with families and the community; teachers work to develop partnerships with families and community members to both understand and scaffold learning and behavior practices in the classroom.
Multiple opportunities: Teachers understand that students are often learning and codeveloping a new culture of power and that they will need multiple chances to succeed; teachers see students as developing beings; teachers do not give up on students; teachers realize that too many students are not used to experiencing success inside of the classroom and encourage students to put forth effort even when tasks are difficult.
Avoid placing students' destiny in the hands of others: Teachers realize that they likely know their students better than any other in the school and refuse to place students' discipline, punishment, or correction in the hands of others (e.g., principal, resource officer).
Develop and maintain high expectations: Teachers realize that they must push students to reach success because the stakes are so high for their students; teachers refuse to water down the curriculum because they feel sorry for their students; teachers are committed to helping their students succeed and refuse, as Ladson-Billings (2002) stressed, to grant students permission to fail.
Realize that each student is an individual: Teachers realize that each student brings a different set of strengths and needs into the classroom.
Be stern and fair: Teachers make it clear that they expect excellence and, at the same time, keep in mind that they must be fair to each individual student.
Use humor to demystify and break down barriers in the classroom: Teachers understand that it is acceptable to laugh in the classroom and to create the kind of classroom space where students feel safe and happy.
Develop a frame of mind for success: Teachers really believe that their students can and will succeed; they build a way of thinking about and a way of viewing their students as those who can and will succeed; teachers' practices consequently are shaped by this belief, and students reap the benefits.

A CHARGE TO PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FACILITATORS

Finally, we cannot stress enough how important it is for professional development facilitators to seriously consider the ways in which classroom management, power, and control are addressed in learning and development opportunities for teachers and other educators. Rather than developing learning opportunities for teachers that only marginally push them to center their own power and privilege, facilitators have an opportunity to shepherd teachers into transformative practices that disrupt the status quo. Too many professional development sessions are presented from a race-, culture-, power-, and justice-neutral standpoint, and such an approach can be devastating for particular groups of students, as discussed throughout this book. If facilitators are serious about improving teaching and learning opportunities in schools, they must get serious about discussing the taboo—the uncomfortable—for the sake of student learning and overall health and humanity.

We also encourage professional development facilitators to develop sustained opportunities for teachers to develop over time. It is difficult for lasting, scalable influence of professional development to show up in teachers' practices when professional development opportunities are not well focused and sustained over time. Thus, professional development focused on classroom management should center the ideas throughout this book in ways that are relevant for their context and do so consistently and over time. We hope that individual teachers will transform their practices, and we are even more hopeful that entire schools will change their cultures to rethink and reimagine classroom management for justice. This means that professional development needs to be done with individual teachers, collectives of them, and the whole school. If we seriously rethink the ways in which we provide professional learning opportunity for educators, and if educators are actually consciously involved as cofacilitators of their learning (just as students should be in the classroom), we could gain much more traction in improving classroom management practices for equity and justice. We strongly encourage professional development opportunities that address and center the list of recommendations in the previous section.

FINAL INSIGHTS

We conclude with a final call to educators to fight for and with *every* student they interact with every single day. Students, regardless of their race, gender, sexual orientation, ZIP code, language, or religious affiliation (or not), deserve educators who expect the very best for them while concurrently co-constructing learning environments that are fair and equitable and that help students realize and reach their full capacity to live and learn. As Delpit and White-Bradley (2003) shared their memories of working with students, they wrote,

> Because we serve low-income African American and other students of color—children who are part of a demographic group

> most likely to be classified as disciplinary problems or behavior disordered—you might expect that our memories would be replete with stories of children engaging in unruly and dangerous acts. To the contrary, we see thinking children who must grapple with issues of *power and control* [italics added], and who for the sake of their humanity, often insist that their voices be heard even as schools [and classrooms] find new ways to silence them. (p. 288)

Teacher educators, researchers, policymakers, reformers, and professional development facilitators must include the students themselves from urban, rural, and suburban schools whose needs and interests are too often left out of their respective agendas. By changing and rejecting deficit notions, by recognizing and embracing the expertise students bring into the classroom, and by realizing that there is room for negotiation as we think about the social construction of behavior practices, discipline, and punishment, we might better attend to the needs of students in classrooms. The time is now and the issues are plentiful; the question is, What are we going to do to ensure that every student has an equitable opportunity to learn?

We are hopeful that the title of this book, *"These Kids Are Out of Control,"* resonates with educators in ways that they remember: It should not be educators' charge to "control" students. Rightfully so, students resist practices that oppress them, and one of the most intense forms of oppression is the propensity to try to control another. We must do better if we are serious about meeting and responding to the humanity of our students. We must do better if we are serious about reimagining classroom management for equity and justice. We hope this book serves as an invitation to teachers and a tool to assist those teachers who work overtime to make a difference for all their students every day!

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