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Scripting the Moves: Class, Control, and Urban School Reform

Golann, Joanne W.

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SCRIPTING THE MOVES:

CLASS, CONTROL, AND URBAN SCHOOL REFORM

Joanne W. Golann

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ABSTRACT

What does it take to equalize opportunities for disadvantaged students? The highly regimented disciplinary system adopted by high-achieving no-excuses urban charter schools is premised on the idea that disadvantaged students benefit from greater social control. Yet progressive educators have argued that these tight strictures reproduce social class inequalities by reinforcing working-class skills. In this dissertation, based on 15 months of fieldwork between 2012 and 2013 in a no-excuses middle school I call Dream Academy, I detail the everyday experiences of students, teachers, and administrators inside the school to understand the costs and benefits of a highly structured disciplinary system.

Schools must provide a safe and orderly environment for teaching to occur. I show how a strict disciplinary system establishes order where shared norms are lacking but also reinforces inequalities in students' social and behavioral skills. I argue that Dream Academy, contrary to conventional scholarly explanations, emphasizes conformity, rule-following, and deference not because of teachers' low expectations for their students, but because of their high expectations for their students, their belief that schools can and must close the achievement gap. Yet, while school leaders believe that what works for disadvantaged students is just such a highly scripted, step-by-step approach, in practice, I found that what worked best was teachers' ability to diminish the need for authoritarian structures by commanding moral authority. Despite school leaders' desire to create a teacher-proof system, it was the teachers themselves who moderated the rigid systems, learning when to show discretion and how to balance strictness with warmth. It was the authoritative presence of the best teachers that earned them the respect and trust of students, and created an order that was durable and welcomed. In contrast, teachers who stuck too closely to school systems were perceived by students as unfair and out to get them. Thus,

while the school's tight procedures and enforcement appeared to maintain order, these were only tools in the hands of the teacher, and often provoked more resistance than compliance. To establish order without impinging so heavily on students' autonomy, I argue that authoritarian schools must give way to authoritative teachers.

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PREFACE

What does it take to equalize opportunities for disadvantaged students? The highly regimented disciplinary system adopted by high-achieving no-excuses urban charter schools is premised on the idea that disadvantaged students benefit from greater social control. Yet progressive educators have argued that these tight strictures reproduce social class inequalities by reinforcing working-class skills (Anyon, 1980; Bowles & Gintis, 1976; Giroux, 1983). In this dissertation, based on 15 months of fieldwork between 2012 and 2013 in a no-excuses middle school I call Dream Academy, I detail the everyday experiences of students, teachers, and administrators with the school's prescriptive behavioral practices in order to understand the costs and benefits of a highly structured disciplinary system. I find that strict disciplinary systems establish order where shared norms are lacking but also reinforce inequalities in students' social and behavioral skills by emphasizing conformity, rule-following, and deference.

This dissertation makes three important contributions. First, I fill a gap by studying a new form of discipline used by high-achieving urban charter schools, bringing renewed attention to the socializing role of schools. I challenge ideas that no-excuses schools are successful because they teach middle-class norms and instead argue that they reinforce working-class skills. To make sense of this paradox, I discuss how research intended to unveil the hidden curriculum can disguise social control. Second, I reconsider Bowles and Gintis' (1976) seminal findings about how schools reproduce inequalities. Instead of producing workers to sustain industrial capitalism, I argue that schools produce worker-learners to close the achievement gap. I find that Dream Academy, contrary to conventional explanations, emphasized rule-following and deference not because of teachers' low expectations for their students, but because of their *high* expectations for their students, their belief that schools can and must close the achievement gap.

Third, I offer an alternative way to reconcile the "contradictions of control" (McNeil 1986) that schools face between establishing order and developing students into active and engaged citizens. Extending recent work on teacher authority (Arum, 2003; Goodman, Hoagland, Pierre-Toussaint, Rodriguez, & Sanabria, 2011), I show how teachers who earn students' trust and respect can maintain order without compromising other school goals. I also find that teacher authority is largely embodied and difficult to teach.

Establishing order is a critical problem for urban schools, one that school leaders are desperate to solve. I observed the enormous amount of work it took to keep order, the ever-present fear of losing order, and the compromises school leaders made for the sake of order. What the no-excuses model provided—through its tightly regulated, punitive form of discipline—was a way to keep order. The previous experiences of school staff in chaotic urban schools had taught them that they needed to be much more prescriptive to establish a basic level of control to enable teaching and learning. Instead of conceptualizing what might work, school leaders copied what worked to maintain order in other successful urban schools.

What works for order, however, may not work to foster diverse school goals. As much as school staff wanted students to become independent thinkers and agents of social change, they failed to provide sufficient opportunities for students to develop more proactive skills. As students learned to monitor themselves, follow rules, and defer to authority, they were not encouraged to develop the interactional skills that middle-class students use to successfully navigate college and other middle-class institutions (Calarco, 2011; Karp & Bork, 2012; Khan, 2011; Lareau, 2003). While middle-class students learn when and how to bend rules in their favor (Calarco, 2011; Mehan, 1980; Streib, 2011), Dream Academy students learned to always follow rules and show self-control.

Ensuring order and achievement while also encouraging students to be assertive, take initiative, and negotiate with authority is a central tension that urban schools face. Through my fieldwork, I discovered an alternative way to think about, and potentially resolve, this dilemma. I went into the field to study authoritarian schools and came out studying authoritative teachers. School leaders believe that what works for disadvantaged students is a highly scripted, step-by-step approach. In practice, I found, what worked best was teachers' ability to diminish the need for authoritarian structures by commanding moral authority. Despite school leaders' desire to create a teacher-proof system, it was the teachers themselves who moderated the rigid systems, learning when to show discretion and how to balance strictness with warmth. It was the authoritative presence of the best teachers that earned them the respect and trust of students, and created an order that was durable and welcomed. In contrast, teachers who stuck too closely to school systems were perceived by students as unfair and out to get them. Thus, while the school's tight procedures and enforcement appeared to maintain order, these were only tools in the hands of the teacher, and often provoked more resistance than compliance.

Debates over social class and control have largely overlooked the role of teachers and teacher authority in establishing order. Instead of debating whether urban schools should emphasize greater freedoms or stricter controls, I came to see that these debates obscured the far more important issue of teacher authority. Disciplinary systems must support teachers in their efforts to establish authority, not act as a substitute for them. In choosing disciplinary systems, schools need to consider whether they abet teachers or hamper their efforts to earn students' respect. Systems that are too strict can undermine teacher legitimacy, while those that are too flexible may not support teachers in their efforts to maintain control.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

While schools have long been viewed as a panacea for society's problems, traditionally they have not been held accountable to this call (Meyer & Rowan, 1977). The highly influential Coleman Report published in the 1960s suggested that schools could do little to overcome the persistent effects of poverty and family background on student achievement (Coleman, 1966). In a similar vein, education scholars have argued that improving schools requires improving society (K. Alexander, Entwisle, & Olson, 2014; Anyon, 1995; Darling-Hammond, 2010). It is unfair to think that educators alone should—or can—solve the problems of poverty.

In the last two decades, however, educational policy in the United States has worked from different assumptions. Instead of trusting that schools are doing the best they can, federal and state governments are increasingly holding schools and teachers accountable for their students' performance. Accountability discourse has cyclically emerged throughout U.S. education reform, but recent educational trends toward privatization and marketization have strengthened this focus (Mehta, 2013). Increasingly, schools are being subjected to market-based reforms, like performance incentives, high-stakes testing, school choice, and teacher evaluations. Beginning with *No Child Left Behind* (2001), schools, no matter how disadvantaged the students they serve, are required to show student progress and narrow achievement gaps by race and social class. They are allowed no excuses.

Yet, what evidence do we have that schools can, in fact, close the achievement gap? Over the second half of the twentieth century, a wide array of reform efforts were introduced to improve urban education in the United States. Among the most notable were the desegregation of schools under Brown v. Board of Education, federal Title I funds for high-poverty schools, and a number of research-based reform models, such as James Comer's School Development

Program, Ronald Edmonds's Effective Schools movement, and Robert Slavin's Success for All. Yet, there is little evidence that these reforms have produced their intended effects (L. F. Miron & John, 2003; Payne, 2008). Urban schools continue to face problems of high absenteeism, poor-quality instruction, school safety concerns, and low academic achievement.

In the past two decades, one of the most significant education reforms has been the advent of charter schools. Charter school advocates argue that the failure of schools to close achievement gaps results from bureaucratic hurdles and weak and lazy teachers supported by powerful teacher unions. If schools were given greater freedoms to set their own practices, such as hiring teachers outside of the teachers union and extending the school day and year, they would be able to innovate and develop more effective school models (Chubb & Moe, 1990). As public schools that are independent of most state and local regulations, charter schools are given this autonomy. Yet, despite their promise, charter schools have not significantly increased student achievement, with charter school students on average performing no better than traditional public school students on standardized assessments (Carnoy, Jacobsen, Mishel, & Rothstein, 2006; Nelson, Rosenberg, & Van Meter, 2004; Roy & Mishel, 2005).

A group of urban charter schools, however, seems to be defying the odds. These high-achieving, "no excuses" schools appear to be doing the impossible—narrowing, and even closing, racial achievement gaps (Abdulkadiroglu, Angrist, Dynarski, Kane, & Pathak, 2009; Angrist, Pathak, & Walters, 2011; Dobbie & Fryer, 2011a, 2011b). No-excuses schools like KIPP (Knowledge is Power Program), Achievement First, Uncommon Schools, Success Academies, Mastery, Aspire, and YES Prep predominantly serve low-income, minority students and have been widely praised for their success in raising these students' test scores and graduation rates. The U.S. Department of Education declared that KIPP is "widely considered

one of the most promising initiatives in public education today" (2004, p. 38) and no-excuses schools have been featured in media outlets like *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *Newsweek*, *Forbes*, *Oprah*, and *Sixty Minutes* and in a popular documentary, *Waiting for Superman*. To supporters, these no-excuses schools provide proof that schools can get their students to achieve, regardless of students' race or ethnicity, socioeconomic status, neighborhood, or skill level (Carter, 2000; Thernstrom & Thernstrom, 2003).

Replicating these "gap-closing" schools (S. F. Wilson, 2008) has come to be seen as a large-scale education reform strategy. Although some have questioned the scalability of these schools (S. F. Wilson, 2008; Yeh, 2013), no-excuses schools have quickly expanded through philanthropic and public support. Between 1999 and 2009, philanthropies spent approximately $500 million to support the development of charter management organizations (CMOs) as a way to replicate high-quality charter schools (Hall & Lake, 2010). As the executive director of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation explained, "We have a better chance of seeing a much higher quality of school when schools are part of a network. You get a proven model" (Lake, Dusseault, Bowen, Demeritt, & Hill, 2010, p. 3). The U.S. Department of Education provided $50 million to support the replication and expansion of high-quality charters, and also allows chronically underperforming public schools to reopen under the management of a CMO (see Farrell, Wohlstetter, & Smith, 2012). Although not all CMOs use a no-excuses approach, the highest-performing ones do (Furgeson et al., 2012).

Based on searches of school websites, I compiled a list of no-excuses schools, their founding dates, and the number of students they serve (Table 1). This list is not comprehensive but illustrates the growth of these schools across the country in the last two decades. In 1994, KIPP was founded by two Teach for America teachers as an after-school program serving 47

students. In 2015, KIPP served approximately 70,000 students in 183 schools nationwide; it plans to double in size in five years (KIPP Foundation, 2016). While no-excuses schools still serve a tiny fraction of public school students, they are the dominant charter school model in some cities. Angrist et al. (2011) found that 71 percent of urban charter schools in Boston identified as no-excuses schools. Public school districts, including those in Houston, Chicago, and Denver, also have experimented with no-excuses practices (Fryer, 2014). Thus, despite serving a small fraction of public school students, these schools have had a disproportionate influence on educational policy and practice.

Table 1

No-Excuses Charter Schools

Network	No. Schools	No. Students	Locations	Founding Date
KIPP	183	70,000	nationwide	1994
Uncommon Schools	44	16,000	MA, NY, NJ	2005 (1997)
IDEA	44	24,000	TX	2000
Aspire	38	14,600	CA, TN	1998
Success Academy	34	11,000	NY	2006
Achievement First	30	10,000	NY, CT, RI	2003 (1999)
Green Dot	23	10,000	CA, TN, WA	1999
Democracy Prep	17	5,040	NY, NJ, DC, CA	2006
YES Prep	15	9,000	TX	1998
Mastery	15	10,500	NJ, PA	2001
ICEF	12	4,000	CA	1999
Young Scholars	6	2,500	PA, DC, NJ, TN	1999
Match	4	1,250	MA	2000
Promise Academies	2	1,800	NY	2004

Note. Data retrieved November 2015 from school websites. Founding date in parenthesis is the founding date of the first school in the network.

A Proven Model?

Over the past decade, a number of methodologically rigorous studies have substantiated the success of no-excuses schools. These studies make use of the admissions process to these schools, which is lottery-based and random. Because many no-excuses schools have more students who apply than can be admitted, researchers can compare the outcomes of those who apply to the lottery and are not admitted with those who apply and are admitted. In this way, they can better isolate the "treatment effect" of no-excuses schools on student achievement. In a meta-analysis of six experimental studies of no-excuses schools, Cheng et al. (2015) found a positive and significant impact of no-excuses schools on student achievement scores.[1] Attending a no-excuses school for one year improved student math scores by .25 of a standard deviation (SD) and reading scores by .16 SD. An average Black student who attended a no-excuses school for four years could potentially close the Black-White achievement gap, which is generally considered around 1 SD.[2] The economist Roland Fryer, the author of one of the lottery studies (Dobbie & Fryer, 2011a), was stunned at the large effect size of no-excuses schools. In an email to *New York Times* columnist David Brooks, Fryer wrote that the results of the study "changed my life as a scientist" (Brooks, 2009).

Critics claim that the success of no-excuses schools is driven by high rates of attrition (G. Miron, Urschel, & Saxton, 2011), selection of better and more motivated students and parents (Carnoy et al., 2006; G. Miron et al., 2011), and lower rates of English language learners and students with disabilities (G. Miron et al., 2011; Woodworth, David, Guha, Wang, & Lopez-

[1]These studies include no-excuses elementary, middle, and high schools in Massachusetts,
[2]Cheng et al. (2014) note that the extent to which the lottery achievement gains generalize to all no-excuses schools, not just those that are over-subscribed, is less clear. Researchers have found, however, that outcomes for non-lottery no-excuses schools are comparable to those of lottery schools, although academic gains tend to be slightly lower (Abdulkadiroglu, Angrist, Dynarski, Kane, & Pathak, 2009; Tuttle et al., 2013).

Torkos, 2008). One study, for example, found that approximately 40% of African American males left these schools between grades 6 and 8 (G. Miron et al., 2011). A subsequent study by Mathematica Policy Research of 22 KIPP schools also found high levels of attrition (34 percent by eighth grade), but found that these rates were comparable to the local public school district and no higher for Black males (Nichols-Barrer, Gleason, Gill, & Tuttle, 2016). Moreover, the report found that the effects of attrition, selective replacement, and unmeasurable differences – such as positive peer effects from having a school of well-behaved, motivated students – were not large enough to account for the magnitude of the KIPP effects.

A different critique is that scores on standardized tests do not reflect actual learning as teachers can raise test scores by teaching to the test or by focusing on a narrow set of skills. No-excuses students, however, perform well on national assessments that include higher-level thinking (Tuttle et al., 2013) as well as on ACT and SAT tests. Altogether, these studies suggest that no-excuses schools are having a significant, positive impact on the achievement of low-income, minority students.

What drives these impacts, however, is less clear. No-excuses schools share a common set of practices, which typically include extended instructional time, frequent student testing, highly selective teacher hiring, intensive teacher coaching, teacher-directed instruction, a focus on basic math and literacy skills, parent contracts, a college-going culture, and a highly structured disciplinary system (Dobbie & Fryer, 2011a; Thernstrom & Thernstrom, 2003; Whitman, 2008; S. F. Wilson, 2008). Evaluations of no-excuses schools typically do not distinguish between these different features, not all of which may contribute to student achievement (Angrist et al., 2011; Dobbie & Fryer, 2011a). The "proven model" is taken as a black box, replicated without consideration of whether each practice is necessary or beneficial

for students.

In particular, criticism has been mounting against the no-excuses disciplinary system (Carr, 2014; Goodman, 2013; Taylor, 2016). Critics worry that the tightly controlled, rule-bound behavioral system embraced by no-excuses schools may actually *undermine* student success, negatively impacting students' self-esteem, identity, and ability to make choices (Ben-Porath, 2013; Ellison, 2012; Goodman, 2013; Lack, 2009). Based on reviews of handbooks from three Philadelphia no-excuses schools along with visits to these schools, Goodman (2013) highlighted four of their controversial disciplinary features: pervasive monitoring of students, sweating the small stuff, using the language of choice in the absence of choice, and degrading students' self-worth. Drawing from the same data, Ben-Porath (2013) suggested that the totalizing environment of no-excuses schools does not allow students to develop the civic skills or virtues to realize academic and civic goals – e.g., the ability to listen, take in another's opinion, shape a response, or deliberate a point of interest. Others have raised concerns that no-excuses schools promote conformity over critical thinking (Ellison, 2012; Horn, 2011; Lack, 2009) and reinforce White, middle-class norms while disregarding students' home cultures (White, 2015).

In contrast to most urban schools that pick their battles, no-excuses schools sweat the small stuff. These schools generally do not permit students to talk quietly in the hallway, enter and exit classrooms on their own, keep backpacks at their desk, wear jewelry, stare into space, slouch, put a head down, get out of a seat without permission, or refuse to track a teacher's eyes (Goodman, 2013; Lake et al., 2012; Whitman, 2008). In his book, *Sweating the Small Stuff: Inner-City Schools and the New Paternalism*, David Whitman (2008) characterizes the no-excuses approach as paternalistic, attributing these schools' success to their explicit efforts to re-socialize students into middle-class behavioral norms like discipline, attention, punctuality, and

effort (see also Thernstrom & Thernstrom, 2003).Whitman argues that this highly prescriptive approach is beneficial, and perhaps even necessary, for low-income students to succeed. "Giving disadvantaged adolescents a full and fair shot at success in life may require a period of close supervision and explicit instruction on how to learn and how to live," he writes (2008, p. xii).

No-excuses school leaders likewise believe that a consistent, school-wide approach to managing student behavior is foundational to their success (Lake et al., 2012). To support this perspective, the first National Study of Charter Management Organization Effectiveness found that the highest-achieving charter networks implemented comprehensive behavioral policies, enforced disciplinary policies consistently, used rewards and sanctions, and had zero-tolerance policies for dangerous behaviors (Furgeson et al., 2012). Similarly, in a study of 43 KIPP middle schools, Tuttle et al. (2013) found that school-wide behavioral codes had a positive association with student test scores. These studies, while exploratory in nature,[3] reinforce the notion that no-excuses behavioral practices are key to these schools' remarkable academic success.

Yet the debate continues. In an attempt to get inside the black box, Dobbie and Fryer (2011b) collected a wealth of data on 35 New York City charter schools through interviews with administrators, teachers, and students; through videotaped classroom observations; and through administrative data on student outcomes and demographics. They found that five practices explained nearly half of the variance in school effectiveness: data-driven instruction, extended instructional time, high dosage tutoring, intensive professional development, and high academic

[3]Furgeson et al. (2012) caution that their results are exploratory, based on bivariate associations between individual practices and student test score impacts and not to be interpreted as causal relationships. Because of their small sample size and the lack of significance in certain model specifications, Tuttle et al. (2013) also do not make conclusive statements about the impact of school behavioral practices on student achievement.

and behavioral expectations.[4] Notably, they also found that, net of these five practices, the no-excuses behavioral approach (e.g., school-wide behavioral rules, desk and backpack rules, silence in the hallways, and tracking the teacher[5]) had no association with students' academic achievement.[6] These results, Dobbie and Fryer concluded, are "highly suggestive that there is nothing mystical about "No Excuses" schools" (2011b, p. 19). In other words, no-excuses schools are successful because they include these five features, not because they sweat the small stuff. Schools that use different approaches and philosophies, but share these five practices, also find success.[7]

In a subsequent study, Fryer (2014) designed a randomized field experiment to test the effectiveness of these five practices. Collaborating with 20 of the lowest-performing Houston public schools, he found that the treatment schools that implemented the five best practices showed significant increases in students' standardized test scores.[8] These schools did not have to adhere to a no-excuses disciplinary system. To ensure "high expectations," schools were required to set and post student goals, present visual evidence of a college-going culture, and have parents sign contracts to honor school expectations, but they did not have to establish a school-wide

[4]Dobbie and Fryer coded a school as having high expectations if the school administrator ranked "a relentless focus on academic goals and having students meet them" and "very high expectations for student behavior and discipline" as the top two priorities. School leaders chose from a list of ten priorities, including "a comprehensive approach to the social and emotional needs of the whole child," "building a student's self-esteem through positive reinforcement," and "prioritizing each child's interests and passions in designing a project-based unit."
[5]To measure no-excuses culture, Dobbie and Fryer used a list of ten multiple-choice questions written for the purposes of the study by the founder of a prominent no-excuses school.
[6]One could argue that some of these best practices are correlated with the no-excuses disciplinary approach; for example, no-excuses schools devote a significant amount of professional development to training teachers on behavioral practices.
[7]In their sample, Dobbie and Fryer (2011b) had six charter schools that showed "high expectations" but were not no-excuses schools (see Additional Materials online).
[8]There was only a significant impact on math scores, not reading scores. No-excuses schools tend to have weaker impacts on reading scores than on math scores (Angrist, Pathak, & Walters, 2011; Dobbie & Fryer, 2009).

system of rewards and consequences or prescribe silent hallways, for example. School principals played a key role in establishing school culture, and they varied in their implementation of school behavioral practices. Some relied on school-wide, incentive-driven behavioral systems while others did not.[9]

Given the potential costs—and uncertain benefits—of highly regimented disciplinary practices, it is critical to more carefully examine the advantages and disadvantages of no-excuses disciplinary practices. For the many critiques launched against no-excuses school discipline, there have been few empirical studies conducted inside these schools. This dissertation, based on 15 months of fieldwork in a no-excuses middle school in a mid-sized Northeastern city between 2012 and 2013, explores these disciplinary practices from the perspective of those inside these schools: students, teachers, and administrators. I include the experiences of these different stakeholders with the aim of providing a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of what the disciplinary system accomplishes and where it falls short.

In the remainder of the chapter, I present my research questions and literatures, methods, and chapter summaries.

Research Questions and Literatures

The main research question of this dissertation is: *How do students, teachers, and administrators interpret and experience a highly regimented disciplinary system?* My sociological interest in this question emerges from my study of schools and inequality. In particular, I am interested in how disciplinary structures promote or impede opportunity for

[9]"Some schools seemed to create such an intense and academically nurturing environment that students didn't have the time or inclination to misbehave. Other schools had to create a safe environment before academics were even possible, which meant a greater emphasis on behavioral systems" (personal communication, Brad Allan, Chief of Laboratory Experiments at EdLabs, August 27, 2015. Allan managed the study's Houston research operations).

disadvantaged students. The dispute over how much structure or freedom is beneficial for students is part of a longstanding ideological debate about school curricula, methods, and structures (Hirsch, 1996; Kliebard, 2004; Rury & Rury, 2002; see Tyack, 1974). At the heart of this debate, I argue, is a tension between order and learning, what Linda McNeil (1986) has called the "contradictions of control."

In her book, *Contradictions of Control*, Linda McNeil (1986) identifies a tension between a school's goals for order and learning. As large bureaucracies that credential masses of students, schools have an administrative function to process and manage students, one that comes into conflict with teachers' goals to develop their students into active, critical thinkers. Pressured to keep things running smoothly, teachers simplify course content and rely on teacher-directed instruction to secure minimal compliance from their students. While McNeil's focus is on curriculum and school knowledge in large suburban high schools, the contradiction she highlights between order and learning has been at the center of education reform debates in the United States.

During the first half of the 20th century, the U.S. progressive education movement, led by John Dewey, embraced Romantic ideas of the child as an autonomous being. In *Emile*, Rousseau (1883) argues that the chief aim of education is to allow as much freedom as possible for children to explore and evolve naturally. Children should learn from experience rather than from texts and teachers. They should be given room for expression and free activity instead of being constrained by school rules and structures. While Dewey saw internal freedom as the most important type of freedom, he did not believe it could be separated from external freedom. Without outward freedom, Dewey argued, teachers could not get to know students and facilitate their learning. "Enforced quiet and acquiescence prevent pupils from disclosing their real

natures," he wrote. "They enforce artificial uniformity. They put seeming before being" (1963, p. 62).

In these early and foundational educational writings, we see the tensions between order and learning, with educators like Dewey advocating for greater behavioral freedoms to increase children's learning opportunities. Progressives railed against traditional methods like teacher-directed instruction, drill and kill, and memorization in favor of child-centered teaching, experiential learning, and a more flexible classroom with less formal teacher-student relations. Yet, while these ideas gained prominence in esteemed graduate schools of education, history would prove that too much freedom also compromises school order and achievement. The boldest experiment in translating progressive education ideals into practice was the open education movement of the 1960s and 1970s. In these free schools, students were given as much choice and authority as their teachers. Although low-income, minority students became confident and learned to feel entitled to, and demand, resources from those in power, they also struggled academically, needing more structure and guidance from their teachers to learn basic skills (Swidler, 1979).

Too much freedom may not be beneficial for any student, but it may be particularly detrimental to low-income students. Educational scholar E.D. Hirsch argues that an educational philosophy of 'do your own thing' "was the worst possible prescription for poor children, because it left to their own devices the very children who were most in need of purposeful instruction" (1996, p. 393). From her experience teaching in inner-city Philadelphia in the early 1970s, Lisa Delpit reached a similar conclusion. In her influential essay, she argues that progressive educators reproduce power structures in their uneasiness over using more prescriptive teaching and behavioral methods. "To provide schooling for everyone's children that

reflects liberal, middle-class values and aspirations is to ensure the maintenance of the status quo, to ensure that power, the culture of power, remains in the hands of those who already have it," she argues (Delpit, 1988, p. 285). In other words, by giving disadvantaged students the same freedoms that middle-class parents want for their children, schools may inadvertently fail to provide the structures that these students need to acquire the skills and knowledge that their middle-class peers have already learned outside of school.

Sociological research on social class and control also suggests that working-class students may find it difficult to adjust to a less structured learning environment. In studying socialization patterns in families, Basil Bernstein (1971) argued that working-class families use a *collection code* characterized by strong boundaries between spaces and strict family roles, whereas middle-class families adhere to an *integrated code* characterized by more flexible spaces and person-centered relationships. As a result, he argued that working-class children might perform better in schools with a *visible* pedagogy in which rules are made explicit, teachers exert social control, and time and space are rigidly structured. The middle-class *invisible* pedagogy of flexibility, exploration, and negotiation might be too unfamiliar to working-class students to maintain order effectively. More recent studies have also found that working-class families emphasize obedience and conformity to a greater extent than middle-class families (Calarco, 2014a; Lareau, 2003). In fact, Calarco (2014) described the approach of working-class parents as "no-excuses": these parents encourage their children to submit to their teachers' authority rather than try to negotiate with their teachers.

At the same time that too much freedom may weaken order, too much constraint may not foster learning. As Philip Jackson (1968), who first coined the term "hidden curriculum," argues, academic learning depends on *not* complying with school rules: "In short, intellectual mastery

calls for sublimated forms of aggression rather than for submission to constraints" (p. 36). Psychological research demonstrates that students who feel a sense of personal control and autonomy in their learning show higher achievement (C. E. Ross & Broh, 2000), while feelings of alienation at school have negative consequences for students' academic performance, motivation, and engagement (Eccles et al., 1993; Goodenow, 1993). Standardized structures also impinge on the flexibility teachers need to help students learn, particularly those who struggle academically and are most in need of individual attention (Metz, 1979). While strictness can produce a more orderly environment, schools that are perceived as overly controlling and unfair may actually increase student resistance (Arum, 2003; Metz, 1979).

In sum, highly structured disciplinary systems can fail to transmit to students the self-directive skills beneficial to learning; at the same time, they may keep order by providing a form of discipline familiar to low-income students. To understand how a new set of urban schools is navigating these tensions between order and engagement, and at what cost and consequence, we need to go inside schools. Like McNeil (1986), I argue that the "quality of education depends in large measure on how this basic structural tension is resolved" (p. 334). Although school discipline was of keen interest to early sociologists (Dreeben, 1968; Durkheim, 1973; Parsons, 1959), very few contemporary studies have been conducted of school discipline. While there have been a handful of ethnographic studies of discipline in urban schools, these focus on racial disparities in punishment (Ferguson, 2001) or the policing of schools (Devine, 1996; Nolan, 2011; Shedd, 2015), not on the costs and benefits of structure.

This dissertation contains four empirical chapters. For each of these chapters, I began with a broad question to try to understand how different stakeholders interacted with the school's disciplinary practices. I integrate the background literatures into the chapters themselves but first

I give a brief overview of them here. Each chapter has a distinct argument, which I later weave together into the broader argument for the dissertation.

1. Why did school administrators adopt the disciplinary system?

Much of the literature on the expansion of no-excuses schools has taken a top-down approach. Critics argue that a network of elite White leaders committed to imposing a neoliberal, free-market agenda on education has driven the spread of these schools. Between 1999 and 2009, corporate foundations like the Gates Foundation, the Broad Foundation, and the Walton Family Foundation spent approximately $500 million to spread no-excuses schools (Hall & Lake, 2010; Ravitch, 2013a). Critics worry that these business-minded individuals have had a disproportionate influence in the education field, overshadowing the voices and concerns of communities, schools, and families.

The no-excuses disciplinary system is understood as part of neoliberal practices of standardization, routinization, and efficiency (Lack, 2009; Saltman, 2009; Saltman & Gabbard, 2011). In his critique of KIPP, Lack argues, "KIPP officials openly embrace [neoliberal] values, and like most schools in general, are clearly dedicated to a brand of efficiency that reduces basic human processes like learning and decision-making to tightly controlled and highly regulated activities" (2009, p. 140). With a singular aim of raising test scores, no-excuses schools are seen as embracing a model of *education as enforcement* (Saltman & Gabbard, 2011), neglecting the broader mission of education to form active, engaged citizens.

In Chapter 3, I ask the following questions: Are school leaders education entrepreneurs who embrace a corporate approach to education? Do they single-mindedly pursue academic achievement at any cost? Or, alternatively, do they copy the disciplinary system because they are desperate for something that works? In his book on the founding of KIPP, Jay Mathews, a

Washington Post reporter, suggests that the disciplinary system was put together in an ad hoc fashion rather than a systematic, planned way (Mathews, 2009). The KIPP founders—two Teach for America teachers—copied and compiled different behavioral techniques from effective teachers they had observed in their schools, suggesting that they adopted a highly regimented disciplinary system because they needed something that worked, not because they embraced a neoliberal approach to education. Organizations tend to copy successful models when they face uncertainty about how to achieve goals and when there are fewer successful models in the field (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). Ideology thus may be secondary to legitimacy or expedience.

This chapter examines why school leaders at Dream Academy adopted the no-excuses model, providing a bottom-up view of school reform. In so doing, I also address the potential benefits of rigid disciplinary systems as well as highlight the challenges that school leaders face in implementing and modifying the system.

2. What skills do students learn from the school's disciplinary system?

Chapter 4 focuses on the hidden curriculum of no-excuses schools. Following in a long tradition, I examine how schools transmit social and behavioral skills to students (Dreeben, 1968; Giroux, 1983; Parsons, 1959). Although students resist school practices and draw on their own cultural and social resources to shape their identities (Willis, 1977), schools play an influential role in forming particular types of students and selves (Bowles & Gintis, 1976).

One of the foundational ideas in the sociology of education is the hidden curriculum. In addition to official academic instruction, schools have a hidden curriculum by which they transmit cultural values, behaviors, and skills to students through the structure of daily routines and social relations (Dreeben, 1968; Giroux, 1983; Parsons, 1959). Critical education scholars have argued that, by means of this hidden curriculum, teachers socialize students differently

based on their assumptions about students' future work roles. Schools prepare working-class kids for working-class jobs by socializing them into norms of obedience, docility, and punctuality, while preparing middle-class kids for managerial positions by teaching them leadership and creativity (Bowles & Gintis, 1976). Empirical studies have found that teachers' pedagogical and social control strategies vary by their students' social class backgrounds: teachers emphasize rule-compliance and rote behavior with working-class students, but they emphasize internal motivation, independence, and negotiation with students from more privileged classes (Anyon, 1980; Keddie, 1971; Wilcox, 1982). From this perspective, highly regimented disciplinary systems subject low-income, minority students to a different form of social control than their middle-class counterparts, not preparing them to succeed in middle-class institutions.

While critics have expressed concerns that the no-excuses disciplinary system teaches students conformity and obedience (Ben-Porath, 2013; Ellison, 2012; Goodman, 2013; Lack, 2009), no-excuses school leaders argue that their structures support freedom and creativity and prepare students for college (Lake et al., 2012). Lake et al. (2012) found that school staff at all five high-achieving no-excuses networks they studied "reinforce expectations that students will attend college through a variety of mechanisms, including a focus on the skills and steps necessary to be successful in a college environment" (p. 21). Yet, despite the explicit lessons on character and college that no-excuses schools teach (Seider, 2012), the lessons taught by the school's disciplinary structures may be more powerful. In a national study of KIPP schools, Tuttle et al. (2013, 2015) found that attending a KIPP school had no effect on a variety of measures of student attitudes and behaviors related to college success, including self-control, grit, school engagement, effort/persistence in school, academic confidence, educational aspirations, and good behaviors.

In this chapter, I attend to how school structures and student-teacher interactions communicate lessons to students about the skills that they will need for their success. I also spend some time considering why no-excuses schools purport to teach middle-class skills when they instead, I argue, reinforce working-class skills. This chapter empirically addresses the moral arguments against the rigid disciplinary practices used by no-excuses schools, bringing students' experiences and voices into the conversation.

3. How do teachers adapt to the disciplinary system?

Teachers are by far the largest group of public sector workers. In 2011, there were 3.7 million teachers in the United States compared to approximately 610,000 police, 277,000 firefighters, and 39,000 emergency responders (Greenstone & Looney, 2012). Yet teaching is considered to be weakly professionalized and teacher training inconsistent (Ingersoll, Merrill, & Stuckey, 2012; Lortie, 1975). In 2010, the National Research Council of the National Academies (2010) conducted a systematic review of hundreds of studies and concluded that little is known about the best ways to train teachers to teach in their subject areas or to teach classroom management.

In a classic sociological study of teachers, Lortie (1975) argues that teachers learn to teach through *self-socialization*; "one's personal predispositions are not only relevant but, in fact, stand at the core of becoming a teacher" (p. 79). Because all teachers have observed other teachers in their own schooling, novice teachers have already formed perceptions of what it means to be a good teacher. In contrast to other professions, where novices observe a stark change from lay to professional conceptions of their work, teachers view their early experiences as continuous with their later socialization experiences. As a result, Lortie argues that teachers

may be less receptive to training.[10] Teaching techniques are not seen as universally effective but must pass "through the screen of the teacher's self-concept" (p. 77). Through trial and error, teachers learn what techniques work for *them*. More recent studies confirm that novice teachers hold firm views about teaching that are strongly shaped by their own school experiences and little influenced by their teaching training programs (Borko & Putnam, 1996; Wideen, Mayer-Smith, & Moon, 1998).

Although no-excuses schools intensively train their teachers, the teacher socialization literature predicts that teachers' willingness to implement the school's behavioral practices will be heavily influenced by their values and prior experiences. The young, White, middle-class teachers these schools attract may not be accustomed to a tightly controlled, punitive disciplinary system and struggle to implement it. In Chapter 5, I examine how teachers adapt to the school's disciplinary practices. I focus on teacher's ideological fit with the school's practices, as well as their bodily fit. Following recent work on embodiment in studies of occupational socialization (Desmond, 2006; Winchester, 2008), I consider how teachers' embodied dispositions shape the strategies they take. This chapter highlights the variation in how teachers implement school disciplinary systems and emphasizes the need to consider how teachers mediate school practices.

4. How does the disciplinary system affect teacher authority and student resistance?

Scholars have argued that urban schools face a crisis of moral authority where teachers do not command respect (Arum, 2003; Metz, 1979; Pace & Hemmings, 2007). According to the 2014 School Crime and Safety Report, 9 percent of public schools reported that students committed acts of disrespect towards teachers more severe than verbal abuse at least once a week

[10]"They portray the process as the acquisition of personally tested practices, not as the refinement and application of generally valid principles of instruction. They insist that influences from others are screened through personal conceptions and subjected to pragmatic trial" (Lortie, 1975, p. 79-80).

(Robers, Zhang, & Morgan, 2015). Teacher authority is critical to effective school discipline because it replaces coercion with consent (Arum, 2003; Goodman, 2013; Metz, 1979). A teacher who exerts power may gain compliance through threats and sanctions, while one who commands authority largely depends on students' willingness to submit (Weber, 1958).

Erickson (1987) argues that student resistance—"withholding of assent"—increases when teachers and schools lose their legitimacy. While scholars have predominantly explained student resistance of working-class and minority students in terms of differences in communication styles (Heath, 1983; Hymes & Gumperz, 1972) or limited structural conditions for mobility (MacLeod, 1987; Ogbu, 2003; Willis, 1977), Erickson reconciles these perspectives by showing how these factors can undermine students' trust in the legitimacy of schools and teachers. "Assent to the exercise of authority involves trust that its exercise will be benign," Erickson writes (1987, p. 344). "This involves a leap of faith—trust in the legitimacy of the authority and in the good intentions of those exercising it, trust one's own identity will be maintained positively in relation to the authority, and trust that one's won interests will be advanced by compliance with the exercise of authority." Like Erickson, I examine student resistance through the lens of respect and trust in teacher authority.

School disciplinary systems can work to support or undermine teacher authority. Analyzing a national sample of students, Arum (2003) found that school strictness was positively associated with academic achievement when perceived as fair. Discipline that was perceived as overly strict, however, was associated with negative academic outcomes and higher student resistance. Yet, in a survey of students in five KIPP middle schools, only half of students believed that rules were fair (Woodworth et al., 2008). In Chapter 6, I examine how no-excuses disciplinary practices relate to teachers' ability to earn and lose students' respect. This chapter

shows how overly strict disciplinary systems can undermine teacher authority and increase student resistance.

Methods

Getting In

I first became interested in no-excuses schools when I heard about SLANTing, a method that no-excuses schools use to get students to pay attention. SLANTing stands for Sit Up, Listen, Ask questions, Nod for understanding, and Track the speaker. I was struck by its explicitness—it translated middle-class expectations for showing attention into a simple formula. I certainly nodded when I engaged in conversation, but I had never given it much thought nor remember being taught it. When I started studying Sociology, I was drawn to the concept of "cultural capital" because I recognized the importance of this cultural know-how in getting ahead. Having been raised in an immigrant family, I observed differences in the ways in which my graduate school peers or my husband spoke and interacted and wondered whether these seemingly natural abilities could be taught.

To be a competent student requires a lot of background knowledge, not just about facts and figures but also about what's appropriate to say and do. Sociologists have argued that this knowledge is not equally transmitted to students (Bernstein, 1971; Bourdieu, 1974; Giroux, 1983; Mehan, 1980). Students from middle-class and upper-class backgrounds are more familiar with these unstated behavioral expectations because they more closely match what they have learned in their homes and communities. Working-class and poor students, in contrast, may find it difficult to adapt to what is required of them and face negative sanctions from their teachers when they do not (K. L. Alexander, Entwisle, & Thompson, 1987; Dee, 2005; Roscigno &

Ainsworth-Darnell, 1999). As a result, those with advantages get ahead; those without fall further behind.

But what if schools were to make their expectations for student behavior crystal clear and enforce these expectations with uniformity? Would this lead to more equal opportunities for all students to excel? These questions drew me to no-excuses schools because I thought that they might be explicitly teaching students what they need to know to be successful in school. Through my research, I ended up arriving at a different conclusion about the skills the school was teaching students (see Chapter 4). But at that time, I titled my dissertation prospectus, "Learning How to Learn at a No-Excuses School."

I suspect that because I did not go in to study discipline per say, I had a relatively easy time gaining access. I had three criteria for my school: 1) It followed the no-excuses model, particularly its behavioral approach; 2) it served students in grades 5-8; and 3) it had been in operation for at least two years and demonstrated evidence of effectiveness in increasing students' academic achievement. I focused on middle school students because the majority of no-excuses schools are middle schools. I also thought middle school students would be better able to articulate their feelings and perceptions than elementary school students, and might be more responsive to learning new skills and behaviors than high school students.[11]

I first approached three no-excuses middle schools with my interest in studying how they taught students cultural skills and behaviors. One flat-out declined, citing time constraints on their own teachers and students. The other two schools eventually granted me permission. For one school, I had to apply to conduct research through their central office, and then obtain permission from the school itself. In the second school, which was not part of a network, I met

[11]Studies suggest that children's non-cognitive skills are particularly sensitive to investments between the ages of 8-13 (Cunha & Heckman, 2008).

with the executive director and then obtained approval from the Board of Trustees. Ultimately, I decided to study the second school—which I call Dream Academy—because it was easier for me to access and because they were also open to sharing school data with me.

Dream Academy was particularly open to research for a few reasons. First, the school head had a master's degree in public policy and was familiar with research. Although I was the first researcher to conduct a long-term study of the school, the school had collaborated with a university on a semester-long class research project. Second, like other no-excuses schools, the school prided itself on being data-driven and focused on improvement. Although school leaders told me that they often did not have time themselves to reflect on their practices, they wanted to know what was working and what they could do better. Third, the school was very transparent. The school had an open door policy, and anyone could drop in the school at any time. Parents, for example, were always welcome to observe in their children's classrooms so my request to observe did not appear out of place. Finally, my research questions aligned with the school's own interests in teaching students the skills and behaviors they needed to succeed in school.

Fieldwork and Analysis

Ethnography privileges "being there"—observing and participating in the everyday lives of the people we aim to study. Careful observations in a variety of situations provide rich data that permit researchers to make better inferences and fewer assumptions about what people say, do, and mean (Becker, 1996). Although ethnographers traditionally study communities or groups of people, a number of rich ethnographies have been conducted in schools (Fine, 1991; Khan, 2011; Pascoe, 2011; Valenzuela, 1999) and on school discipline (Ferguson, 2001; Nolan, 2011).

I began my visits to Dream Academy in March 2012 to start getting a sense of the school and to build rapport before my full year of fieldwork. I describe the school at length in Chapter 2.

I visited the school a few times a week and mostly shadowed an eighth-grade class. In the 2012-2013 school year, I became a regular presence in the school, shadowing one fifth-grade and one eighth-grade class almost every school day, typically for four to five hours. My role remained primarily as an observer, but over time I participated more, eating lunch with students, assisting them in class, tutoring them after school, accompanying them on school trips, and joining with teachers to take them to basketball games and movies. To better understand the teachers' perspectives, I also regularly observed teachers' one-on-one meetings with supervisors and weekly staff meetings. I also participated in the summer's two-week teacher orientation. To get to know parents, I attended parent association meetings and school activities. Finally, from August to December 2013, I also conducted observations at Dream Academy's high school and the local community college where students took dual-enrollment courses.

During my school observations, I carried around a laptop or iPad to type notes. Students would sometimes peer over to see what I was writing or even write something themselves. They were surprised to see their words recorded verbatim. I felt awkward knowing that the students were watching me watch them, so I did not always type extensive fieldnotes in school, sometimes jotting down key phrases or incidents. I felt less awkward typing in staff meetings or teacher meetings because I felt that teachers had a better understanding of who I was and what I was doing. In the dissertation, I use quotation marks for words I directly recorded at the time of my observation or audio-recorded during interviews. I use pseudonyms for all individuals, some of which were suggested by my subjects.

Ethnographers tend to favor situated listening over direct interviewing (Sanjek, 1990). As William Whyte's informant told him, in his classic ethnography *Street Corner Society* (2012), "Go easy on that who, what, why, when, where stuff. You ask those questions and people will

clam up on you. If people accept you, you can just hang around, and you'll learn the answers in the long run without even having to ask the questions." While ethnographers do not rely mainly on interviews, they often conduct interviews, typically later in fieldwork, to gather additional information and interpretations. In the last semester of my fieldwork, I solicited interviews from all students in the one fifth-grade and two eighth-grade classes I observed, as well as one seventh-grade class that I did not observe. In total, I interviewed 58 students: 37 eighth graders, 12 fifth graders, and 9 seventh graders. I interviewed 38 girls and 20 boys; 42 were Black, 14 Hispanic, and 2 Asian. Interviews usually took place during lunch in a private room, either individually or in groups of two to three, and lasted approximately 30 minutes. I also interviewed 34 teachers and staff, for one to two hours each; only two teachers were not interviewed. Interviews followed a semi-structured format (see Appendix), and all except two were audio-recorded and transcribed.

There were benefits to conducting interviews after getting to observe students for several months. The most important advantage was my being able to ask follow-up questions to students, or provide them with examples that countered their remarks. I also provided students with teachers' perspectives to see how they would respond. Another advantage was being able to see how the interview situation affected students' responses. I found that a few students acted noticeably different in their interviews than they did in class, typically more deferential and less talkative. Some students also were less negative about the school in interviews.

Finally, I collected a number of school documents, including the school charter application and renewal application, the student and staff handbook, annual reports, student worksheets, professional development presentations, newsletters, and monthly data reports to the staff. I also obtained anonymous student academic and behavioral records for the 2012-2013

school year, which included every recorded behavioral infraction, by type, student identification number, assigning teacher, and consequence given, as well as students' grade point averages, free and reduced lunch status, race, and grade level.

To analyze the fieldnotes and interview transcriptions, I used an inductive approach (Charmaz, 2011), generating hundreds of codes with the assistance of a qualitative analysis program. The process was iterative: creating, refining, adding, and deleting codes. This initial process helped me identify key concepts and ideas to explore further. When I had a better sense of my arguments for each chapter, I did a more focused recoding of the interviews by chapter. Then I read through my fieldnotes again, selecting those that were related to the material.

Reflexivity

"I think these people are all the same people—each one of them is just motivated by a slightly different thing," Mr. Taylor, the school head, reflected on his teaching staff during one of our interviews. "They're all Type A personalities who want to accomplish a great deal. And they come from all the same schools. They look the same, they dress the same, they talk the same, right?" He paused. "Or not they, we. We talk the same, right?"

In appearance and background, I was most like the teachers and staff. I was young, well-educated, ambitious, and middle-class. I could very well have been one of the teachers; like several of them, I had been accepted to Teach for America right after college and spent my college years tutoring low-income students. Not even five feet tall, I looked not much older than the students, but dressed professionally and typing fieldnotes on an iPad, I was an outsider to the students. When students first met me, they often asked me whether I was training to be a teacher.

To help distinguish myself from the teachers, I came to an agreement with the school not to discipline students if I observed minor misbehaviors, but to intervene only if children were at

risk of harm. In time, the students recognized that I was not an authority figure but someone "writing a book" about the school. For example, at lunch, a student would start to censor herself because I was there, and another would jump in, "It's OK, she doesn't do anything." I remember being surprised when a student accused me of switching sides when I told her not to talk in the hallway. Still, I never became a peer to the students as other school ethnographers have tried to do (e.g., Pascoe, 2011). There were a few students I became closer to than others but I was not part of their social circles or a confidante, nor was I familiar with most of the pop culture references they used. My position was closer to that of a teacher's assistant, or what I was—a graduate student writing a book on the school. Because it was important to literally get closer to students to get more information, I found the most natural role for me was to assist them with their work. Thus, I often circulated around the classroom and helped individual students. I sat in the back of the room at an empty desk or in an absent student's seat.

When ethnographers talk about being reflexive, they are attending to the ways in which their observations, fieldnotes, and analyses are shaped by who they are. My race and gender also affected both my access and perspectives. I was one of only a handful of Asian Americans in the school. The students teased a half-Asian boy that I was his sister; they told me that they saw my brother (an Asian man) walking down the street. I was frequently asked about my race, and occasionally mistaken as Hispanic. I felt that my race gave me an advantage in moving between both the predominantly White teaching staff and the Black and Hispanic students. As Asian Americans are often perceived as honorary Whites (Tuan, 1999), teachers saw me as their peer and confidante. Yet, by not being White, I suspect that students felt more open in telling me that a teacher was racist, for example. I did not react, whereas I found that several White teachers became defensive or uncomfortable when students brought up issues of race.

On the other hand, having been raised in predominantly White schools and neighborhoods, race was still invisible to me, part of my social unconscious (Emirbayer & Desmond, 2012). This became clear to me early on in my fieldwork when I participated with teachers in an activity during orientation in which we were asked questions and had to form groups with others who shared our answers. The last question was: Have you ever experienced discrimination? The "yes" group quickly formed; it was almost all Black and Hispanic teachers and staff for whom racial discrimination was an obvious and continuous source of tension. I had to think back to my middle-school days to recollect similar incidents. Although I certainly recognized that the school consisted almost exclusively of Black and Hispanic students mostly taught by White teachers, race was not a dominant frame for my analysis and was further obscured by my interest in social class. Because I did not pay explicit attention to race, I missed opportunities to see racial dynamics that were masked through coded language (Doane & Bonilla-Silva, 2003).

My gender also significantly shaped my interactions. I became friendlier with female students although I did get to know a few boys who were often in trouble. I almost always sat with a table of female students or a mixed-gender table during lunch because I usually made my way to the tables by means of a student whom I knew better. Over time, I tended to sit at the same tables because I did not want to be an unwelcome presence at what was one of the few times of freedom for students. My position as a mother opened a few conversations as well. Students, after revealing their shock that I was old enough to have a kid, liked looking at pictures of my toddler son and asking me questions about him.

In addition to my social position and relationships with students, I think it is important to acknowledge my own tendencies towards flexibility. I think rules are negotiable. I am rarely on

time. I once took a personality test that told me that I would be happiest working in an organization where I could make my own decisions. Although my parents are Chinese, they were very much the opposite of Tiger Mom or Dad. They gave my brother and me free rein to watch hours of Disney afternoon cartoons before dinner, and to pursue what we wanted. Our Chinese piano teacher eventually refused to teach us because my mom would not make us practice. We were sent to take lessons from her French-Canadian husband. As a parent, I also take a flexible approach with my children. During my fieldwork, my son's favorite words were "because?" and "otherwise?"

These preferences shape what I see, what I ask, and what I record. My focus on the school's behavioral procedures, instead of their pedagogical ones, is one obvious bias of my research. There are sure to be others. In this dissertation, I have sought to show the reader the school through the lens of its stakeholders, some who share my perspectives and others who do not. By immersing myself in the school for 15 months, I have tried to understand the place and its people in greater nuance than a visitor passing through. The principal once remarked to me that people often thought they were crazy but he trusted I would form my own opinion because I was there for so long. By re-reading and rethinking my fieldnotes and interviews, I have tried to stay close to the data. What I aim to present in this dissertation is the complicated reality of urban schooling, the difficulty of reform, and the possibilities for change.

Chapter Summaries

The remainder of this dissertation is divided into five chapters and a conclusion. Chapter 2 provides the background for the study. First, I show how Dream Academy "scripts the moves" for students through three key features of the no-excuses disciplinary system: clarity, comprehensiveness, and consequences. Through an analysis of the school's 2012-2013

behavioral records, I then provide a birds-eye view of school discipline. On average, students received 1 infraction every 3 days, and served one detention for behavior every week. One student received 295 infractions in 188 school days. The sheer volume of infractions assigned each day, mostly for minor behaviors like talking out of turn or not following directions, makes clear the salience of Dream Academy's disciplinary system for the everyday experiences of students, teachers, and administrators.

Chapters 3 through 6 take on my substantive research questions. In Chapter 3, I consider why school leaders adopted the school disciplinary system. I add nuance to scholarly claims that outsiders with a neoliberal agenda impose these reforms from above by showing how these reforms solve a real problem for school leaders on the ground. I show how order overwhelms the attention of urban school leaders, and leads them to copy a disciplinary system that is far more prescriptive than they initially thought necessary. Yet, in adopting such a system, school leaders face other challenges in trying to figure out how to make the system work for all kids, how to teach their staff to balance consistency with discretion, and how to modify school structures without losing control.

Chapter 4 focuses on the school's hidden curriculum. First, I distinguish *behavioral norms,* working-class skills that emphasize conformity, obedience, and deference, from *interactional skills*, middle-class skills that privilege expression, independence, and negotiation. I then argue that the school's highly regimented disciplinary system encouraged students to become worker-learners instead of lifelong learners. As students learned to monitor themselves, follow rules, and defer to authority, they failed to develop and practice the interactional skills shown to benefit their middle-class counterparts. This chapter challenges the idea that no-excuses schools are successful because they teach middle-class norms by showing how the

school's disciplinary structures reinforced working-class norms. It also suggests reasons for this paradox, contributing to growing scholarly interest in how research is used in practice.

Chapter 5 examines how teachers adapt to the school's disciplinary system. I identify four teacher types (*naturals*, *imitators*, *adaptors*, and *rejecters*) and relate their different strategies to their varying levels of success. This chapter extends prior work on teacher socialization by emphasizing the importance of how teachers can physically adapt to the school's disciplinary expectations in addition to how their values align with the school's demands. To effectively discipline, I argue, teachers must not only be willing to implement the school's disciplinary practices; they must feel like themselves when doing so. *Imitators* appeared to students as too mechanical, while *rejecters* struggled to find alternative ways to establish control. Teachers who felt most like themselves when teaching—either because they were naturally aggressive (*naturals*) or adapted the system to better fit their own dispositions (*adaptors*)—were most successful in moderating the rigid school system to win student compliance.

Chapter 6 explores teacher authority and student resistance under a highly structured disciplinary system. The chapter weaves together concepts of respect and resistance to understand why students constantly defied school rules even as they appreciated the strictness of the school. I show how the school's disciplinary system was a key source of student resistance, provoking students to disrespect teachers who disrespected them. Although it was difficult for teachers to earn students' respect, it was not impossible. The best teachers found a way to balance a no-nonsense demeanor with a sense of caring, make learning relevant and accessible, and stick it out long enough to win students over to their side. This chapter emphasizes the importance of cultivating respectful relationships in effective urban school discipline and

suggests a new way to think about social control. To create an order that is durable and welcomed, I argue that authoritarian schools must give way to authoritative teachers.

Finally, the Conclusion summarizes the argument and contribution of the dissertation, discusses limitations of the study, and provides implications for research, policy, and practice.

CHAPTER 2: DISCIPLINE AT DREAM ACADEMY

On a warm evening in March, hundreds of families gathered in the gym of Dream Academy, a high-achieving, no-excuses urban charter school. The rows of metal chairs were filled with parents, grandparents, relatives, and children, each family holding a numbered ticket. The floors sparkled from having just been cleaned. It was lottery day.

I wandered around the room and entered into conversation with three Black mothers, each vying for a ninth grade spot. They insisted that the local public high school was not an option for their children—"maybe in the 50s and 60s but it's deteriorating, it's not safe, my kid would not make it there," one mother asserted. The second mother agreed: "They would eat our kids up." The third mother said that if her son didn't get in to the school, she would sell her house and move to an apartment in an adjacent town so he could attend one of those high schools. "My child must have a good education," she insisted. "This is what our options are. We're sitting here with a ticket."

As I circulated around the room, I heard similar stories. One mother had been trying for two years to get her son into the school. In the meantime, she had home-schooled him. We're "getting desperate," she said. Another mother expressed her anger at having no other public options for her children. "I've lived here 17 years. I pay taxes," she said. "They blame us parents" but her son's school had no music program, art program, or textbooks.

What most struck me in my conversations with these families was that they knew few details about Dream Academy beyond hearing that it was a good school. A few had heard that it was strict but they did not know any specifics about the school's disciplinary approach, and looked to me for information. Their choice was not an informed choice from many possibilities; it was the only choice they perceived that they had—and for that matter, their choice depended

on a lucky spin of a wooden ball. This year, 300 families were competing for 80 spots. Mr. Taylor, the school head, explained that "for these families, it's like winning the megamillion, the powerball."

In this chapter, I provide background on Dream Academy, focusing on the disciplinary practices that were unfamiliar to these families eagerly seeking to gain admission to the school. I discuss three key features of the no-excuses disciplinary approach (*clarity*, *comprehensiveness*, and *consequences*) and show how they operate at Dream Academy. Finally, I conclude with an analysis of student behavioral records for the 2012-2013 school year.

Dream Academy

Dream Academy leases a brown-brick building at 6th Street, across from a line of vacant storefronts, next to a Catholic church. Opened in 2007, it is the highest performing middle school in the city. On the corner of the entrance-door window, a pair of bilingual 8.5 by 11 inch flyers displays a graph of the school's achievement on last year's state test, Dream Academy's blue bar rising high above the district's yellow bar.

Dream Academy is located in a medium-sized Northeastern city. Like many other deindustrialized cities, the city faces problems of crime, concentrated poverty, and poor quality schools—fewer than half of students graduate from the city's public high schools. Charter schools in the city have had a mixed record of success. In the year preceding my fieldwork, three charter schools in the city closed for discipline problems, low attendance, and most significantly, poor student performance. A fourth charter school was placed on probation. In contrast, Dream Academy has had continued academic success. The school was recognized by the state for significantly improving students' standardized test scores, and both its charter renewal application and expansion plan have been approved. At the start of my fieldwork, Dream

Academy's test scores placed it in the top quarter of its peer schools (i.e., schools that serve a similar student demographic). In 2012-2013, the school had 250 students on its waiting list; each year, the waiting list has grown.

At the time of my fieldwork, Dream Academy operated a middle school (grades 5-8) and a high school (grades 9-12). I conducted my fieldwork primarily at the middle school. The middle school served approximately 250 students selected by a random lottery process in accordance with the state's charter school laws. Ninety percent of students received free or reduced school lunch; approximately two thirds of students were Black and one third was Hispanic.[12] Although the school's student demographics mirror those of the city, students and families self-select to apply for admission and are required to sign a contract before they enroll committing to the school's expectations and values. Parents, for example, promise to bring their children to school on time and ensure they complete one to two hours of homework each night, while students commit to following the school's behavioral expectations. Several students told me that they were specifically encouraged to apply to Dream Academy by their former teachers because they were good students.

The school staff was predominantly young and White with little prior teaching experience. It included four newlyweds, a handful of first-time, full-time job holders, three Ivy League alumni, several graduates from local colleges, a large contingent of Teach for America (TFA) alumni, a reporter, a Rugby star, and a former executive assistant to the founder of a highly successful tech start-up company. Most teachers were under 30; at the start of my fieldwork, the youngest teacher was 21 and the oldest was 58. Mr. Bradley, the White school principal, was 34; Ms. Williams, a Black instructional dean who transitioned to becoming the

[12] The school had only 8 White students, 5 Asian students, and 2 Native American students.

principal halfway through my observations, was 29.[13] The school actively recruits teachers from Teach For America; during 2012-2013, the school had four TFA corps members. Dream Academy's staff make-up is similar to those of other no-excuses schools. No-excuses teachers tend to be young, have strong academic backgrounds, come from highly selective colleges, have limited classroom experience, and take alternative routes into teaching (S. F. Wilson, 2008; Woodworth et al., 2008).

Dream Academy describes itself as a no-excuses school and adheres closely to no-excuses practices. For example, the school extends the school day and year, observes teachers and gives weekly feedback, provides after-school and Saturday tutoring, requires families to sign a contract, and promotes college attendance as a goal for all students. School leaders describe themselves as data-driven. Five times a year, the school administers school-wide assessments that reflect the content and conditions of the annual state standardized test. Following these tests, a full day is devoted to analyzing student test results and making plans for re-teaching areas that students have not mastered. As in other no-excuses schools, instruction tends to be traditional and teacher-centered (S. M. Ross, McDonald, Alberg, & McSparrin-Gallagher, 2007; Woodworth et al., 2008).[14] Lessons also follow a regular pattern. A typical lesson sequence consists of a 5-minute Do Now (a short handout or question to get students working right away),

[13]Mr. Bradley planned to serve as principal of the new elementary school the following year, so this arrangement gave Ms. Williams time to ease into the role, with the benefit of having Mr. Bradley around to advise. Ms. Williams did not make significant changes in the school's behavioral practices until the next school year.

[14]No-excuses schools have less-defined instructional practices than they do behavioral ones. They do not subscribe to a specific curriculum or approach, and often develop their own materials. At the start of the year, teachers were instructed to "begin from the end," working with state standards to create a scope and sequence for the entire year, a common practice in no-excuses schools (Woodworth et al., 2008). Classes did not use textbooks, as the principal believed that this gave teachers greater freedom to adapt their teaching to meet students' changing needs.

a review of the Do Now, direct instruction, guided instruction, independent practice, and an exit ticket. In addition to academic classes, students also participate in music, gym, advising, and morning circle—a school-wide assembly that features chants, announcements, recognition of students and teachers, and a short lesson on character.

The school is compact. It has three floors and 14 classrooms: the bottom floor contains the seventh- and eighth-grade classrooms; the second floor houses the main office and the fifth- and sixth-grade classrooms; and the top floor contains the music classes and the cafeteria, which doubles as a gym and auditorium. From the moment students enter the building, they receive constant signals that differentiate the school from other spaces. Classrooms are referred to by their college names—Princeton, Penn, Carnegie Mellon—and painted with college colors and logos. Hallways are filled with college pendants, inspirational quotes, and exemplary student work. There are no lockers inside. While the physical space distinguishes Dream Academy from a traditional public school, the most striking difference is how students use this space. In the next section, I describe Dream Academy's disciplinary practices and how they shape student behaviors.

The 3Cs of School Discipline

No-excuses discipline has been described using a variety of adjectives: highly structured, highly regimented, tightly controlled, prescriptive, paternalistic, militaristic, rule-bound, and authoritarian. Here I describe three key features of this system, which I characterize as the 3Cs: clarity, comprehensiveness, and consequences. Drawing from my fieldwork, I use examples from Dream Academy to illustrate these features.

Clarity

No-excuses schools explicitly teach kids how to be students—that is, how to dress, walk

down the hallway, show attention in class, organize a binder, and celebrate a teammate's accomplishment. Whitman (2008) characterizes no-excuses schools as paternalistic: they explicitly tell students what they are supposed to do, and then ensure that they comply with these expectations through supervision and sanctions.[15] While there are hundreds of authoritarian urban schools, Whitman finds no-excuses schools to be decidedly more prescriptive. "These schools thus require and teach students to meet high expectations for behavior and academic achievement—rather than just encouraging them to aim high," he argues (2008, p. 4). In other words, no-excuses schools do not just state their expectations; they show students exactly how they should get there.

Clarity of expectations is viewed as essential to effective classroom management (Lake et al., 2012). The first weeks at Dream Academy are dedicated to teaching students a common set of behavioral procedures. One of the first lessons is how to sit attentively. "Who's heard of SLANT?" Ms. Anderson, a 31-year-old White teacher and instructional leader, addressed the new fifth graders who sat "criss-cross, applesauce" on the cafeteria floor, not yet having earned their seats. "So the S is for sitting up straight. What I'm not doing is sitting like this," she demonstrated, pretending to slouch back in a chair. "Like this," she rested her hand on her arm. "Try to sit all the way up. Relax your shoulders now. I don't have all eyes." She continued on with "L" for "Listening," explaining the different letters of the acronym: "A" for Ask questions, "N" for Nod for understanding, and "T" for Track the speaker. "Why do we SLANT? It shows respect. Posture is everything. If I'm sitting like this, it doesn't look academic," she showed them, as she leaned backwards on a chair. "SLANTing makes you look and feel smart. It lets you

[15]The new paternalism is a social policy approach that gained prominence in the 1990s. An example of a paternalistic policy is requiring low-income mothers to work in order to receive government benefits.

listen and absorb and retain. It helps you prepare for the real world. I can't go to my job, my mom can't go to her job, my husband can't go to his job without paying attention." By spelling out her directions, Ms. Anderson made it crystal clear what the teachers expected from students when they asked them to pay attention.

A second lesson was how to throw away their food. Filing into empty cafeteria tables, the new students sat down to rehearse lunch procedures. "No student gets up without permission," Ms. Williams reviewed the cafeteria rules. "Not to throw food out, not to get milk. You must remain in your seat at all times." To eliminate the need for students to get up, a trashcan was placed at the end of each table. "When you finish, you will slide your food down to the last person who will slide it into the trashcan," Ms. Williams continued, detailing the process of throwing away trash. "Not dump it, slide it." Next, she instructed students to pretend to eat, then raised her two fingers straight in the air, a signal for students to stop all activity and raise their two fingers. Five more times, Ms. Wiliams had students practice the finger-raising routine until she received a uniform and immediate response. "Mmm, give yourselves a pat on the back," Ms. Williams cheered when students had mastered the technique. "It's very important that even if you're in the middle of something you stop and put your two fingers up and track the speaker."

Although no-excuses schools are characterized as authoritarian, they use a bureaucratic form of control that relies on explicit rules (Edwards, 1991a). Standardizing procedures is a key part of their approach. For the new student orientation, school staff put together a document with nine single-spaced pages of step-by-step instructions for the teachers. The following excerpt illustrates the level of detail the school puts into each procedure:

> Bathroom Break/Water Break – Ms. Anderson (BEGIN: 10:00) Students will practice their heading while others go to bathroom
>
> - Travel to and from Rest rooms – Gym Door: Ms. Johnson, Ms. Phelps. 2nd Floor Landing – Front: Ms. Monroe, 2nd Floor Landing – Back: Mr.

Purcell, 2nd Floor: Ms. Lopez, 1st Floor Landing – Front: Ms. Costello, 1st Floor Landing – Back: Ms. Russo 1st Floor: Ms. Williams
    - Older students first
    - 22 students at a time
    - While travelling, alphabetical, straight, silent, not touching walls
- At rest rooms – Ms. Scott, Ms. Adams, Ms. Armstrong, Ms. Larkin, Mr. Sudano
    - Girls line up to the left, boys to the right
    - 4 students in rest room at a time
    - Leave it cleaner than found it
    - Girls – Cycle issues
    - Boys – Urinating on seat issues
    - Students come out of the restroom and return to their same places in line
    - When students leave the two lines merge (boys and girls) back into their alphabetical line and proceed up the stairs.
    - Waiting students will practice their heading
    - Students will get a drink of water coming back from the bathroom.

It is this explicitness that led me to title the dissertation, "Scripting the Moves." During my fieldwork, I read an interview of a principal of a high-achieving urban school who explained how her school is very intentional in its systems and procedures. "The language that we use in teaching sometimes is 'scripting the moves,'" she said. "You've got to script the moves for students. You have to narrate the experience so students understand exactly what the outcomes are." While Dream Academy does the most explicit setting of expectations at the start of school, teachers narrated expectations for behavior in almost every class I observed and took additional time to reset expectations when student behavior was deteriorating. Through step-by-step procedures, teachers and administrators ensured that their expectations for students were unarguably clear.

Comprehensiveness

Second, *comprehensive* behavioral systems regulate numerous aspects of student behavior, including appearance, movement, and social interaction. No-excuses disciplinary practices have been described as totalizing (Ben-Porath, 2013; Goodman, 2013). The concept of total institutions comes from Goffman (1961) in his study of mental institutions, and is elaborated by Foucault (1977) in his work on prisons. Unlike regular institutions, total institutions exert continuous and meticulous control over individuals, leaving little room for individual expression. Goffman identifies four characteristics of total institutions. First, they separate the inside from the outside, incorporating all three spheres of life: sleep, play, and work. Most no-excuses schools are not boarding schools, but they do extend school hours and require students to complete a substantial amount of homework each night. The other three criteria of total institutions better fit no-excuses schools. First, no-excuses schools treat individuals alike and require them to do the same things together. Second, they tightly schedule activities and monitor them from above. Foucault's description of "the meticulousness of the regulations, the fussiness of the inspections, the supervision of the smallest fragment of life and of the body" resonate with sweating-the-small-stuff practices (Foucault, 1977). Third, they direct all activities towards an overall plan and rational aim of the institution, which in this case, is getting students to college.[16]

[16]No-excuses schools may also be categorized as "greedy institutions" (Coser, 1974) that demand exclusive commitment but do not physically separate members from the outside world. Greedy institutions rely on voluntary compliance rather than external coercion, making themselves appear highly desirable. Consistent with this view, Whitman (2008) argues that no-excuses schools practice a form of benevolent paternalism. While the term paternalism may conjure up negative images of colonialism or slavery, Whitman argues that these schools feel more like families than prisons. Moreover, families choose to put their children in these schools, which often have long waiting lists.

In total institutions, authority is exercised over "a multitude of items of conduct—dress, deportment, manners—that constantly occur and constantly come up for judgment" (Goffman, 1961, p. 41). The student dress code is a good example of the meticulousness of school rules. Many schools require students to wear school uniforms, but Dream Academy focuses on the smallest details. Students must wear solid white or solid black socks, and closed black shoes or all black sneakers. "Off-black or other color patterns, stripes, logos, laces, lips, toes, heels, eyelets, parts of the sole or any other parts of the shoe or sneaker that are visible are not permitted," the Student Handbook notes. Pants cannot be overly loose or tight; neither cargo pants nor skinny leg pants are permitted. Bracelets or necklaces are forbidden, earrings must be smaller than a nickel, and only one watch is allowed. Excessive makeup is prohibited, as are piercings. Students cannot have tattoos, nor can they write on themselves or others. These stipulations are both very clear and all-encompassing.

Total institutions strictly regulate time and space. A sense of urgency pervades the school. To minimize disruptions, students must walk on the second tiled square in the hallways in forward-facing, straight lines. They get dismissed row by row, and follow specific paths to retrieve their bookbags and line up to exit. Special hand signals are used to request tissues, pencils, water, and bathroom privileges. Students are told to leave garbage in the corner of their desk and throw it out when class is over. Foucault's descriptions of military discipline resonate with Dream Academy's tight control of space: "One must eliminate the effects of imprecise distributions, the uncontrolled disappearance of individuals, their diffuse circulation, their unusable and dangerous coagulation" (1977, p. 143). In a similar fashion, class time is subdivided into segments, and teachers often display online stopwatches so students can see how

much time they have left for each activity. Teachers frequently count down. As Foucault argues, this disciplinary logic seeks not only to avoid wasting time, but to extract more from time.

Finally, no-excuses schools emphasize teacher consistency, increasing the totalizing nature of the environment. In a traditional school, students might have a few very strict teachers but this is balanced by teachers who take a more moderate approach. At Dream Academy, school leaders want students to experience the same expectations no matter where they are in school. In Dream Academy's charter application, it describes how common procedures and expectations are a key feature of the school's approach: "Through using a set of common procedures in all classrooms—class rules, how to enter the class, where to see the day's homework, how to write the homework in students' daily planners, how to respond to questions, what signals to follow to become silent, how to read the daily lesson objectives, etc.—we train students to expect certain things in a classroom." Because no-excuses schools use comprehensive and highly regimented disciplinary systems, school leaders fear that a breach in the system will increase student resistance. If a teacher uses alternative disciplinary methods, students may question the necessity or fairness of school rules. When procedures are consistent from day to day and from teacher to teacher, the school believes that students will internalize expectations. "It becomes a routine where they just do it and they don't have to think about it," Ms. Scott, the biracial student affairs dean, explained. "But when it's wishy-washy, it leaves too much for them to have to think about and process."

Consequences

Third, no-excuses schools give out *consequences* when students do not comply with school rules. The broken windows theory, developed by political scientist James Q. Wilson and criminologist George Kelling (1982), argues that crimes are committed because of disorder. Its

name derives from the idea that criminals who see a broken window on a factory will be more likely to vandalize the building because the broken window signals that no ones cares. If the window is fixed, the building will be left alone. Large cities like New York, Chicago, and Los Angeles embraced this "order maintenance" policing strategy in the 1990s, targeting misdemeanors like littering, loitering, prostitution, graffiti, and panhandling.[17] At school, broken windows include things like heads on desk, side conversations, and messy transitions.

To monitor and enforce these minor infractions, no-excuses schools typically use an accounting system. The KIPP schools use a paycheck system in which they assign different deductions for student misbehavior. For example, a student might lose $2 for calling out, $6 for walking inappropriately through the hallways, and $10 for laughing at a peer.[18]At the end of the week, students receive their pretend paychecks, which they can use to purchase items from a school store or qualify for privileges like school field trips, socials, and clubs. Students whose paychecks fall below certain thresholds face consequences like detention, in-school suspension, or even out-of-school suspension (Goodman, 2013; Lake et al., 2012).

Dream Academy initially used a paycheck system and then created a variation of the system based on points. Under the point system, students earn up to 100 points per week. Each day, students can earn up to 20 points: 10 points for completing their homework and 10 points for behavior. Students lose all their behavior points for the day if they earn any infraction. Students can also earn up to 5 additional points for demonstrating positive behaviors and for getting parents to attend school events like parent-teacher conferences. Students who earn above

[17]New York City Mayor Rudolph Giuliani attributed the reduction in crime during the 1990s to this broken windows strategy, but research has found less support that reducing disorder will decrease serious crimes (Harcourt & Ludwig, 2006).
[18]This example is taken from "Defining the Consequences: Student-Behavior Management With Doug Lemov," an Education Week webinar that originally aired on September 17, 2013.

a 75 weekly point average earn privileges like school socials, special dress days, and field trips. Field trips are a highlight for students and included a trip to a water park, a science museum, a snow-tubing lodge, and an end-of-the-year trip to New York City and Philadelphia. Additionally, each marking period, students who earn a 75 average and make honor roll (a B or higher average with no failing grades) also earn a status card that grants them additional privileges like eating lunch with students from other classes, immunity from whole-class punishments, and exemption from homework detention. If students' weekly point averages fall below a certain threshold, they do not earn detentions and suspensions like students do in some no-excuses schools. Instead, Dream Academy assigns detentions and suspensions for specific infractions, as I discuss in detail in the next section. These consequences seem to be more significant to students than earning and losing points.

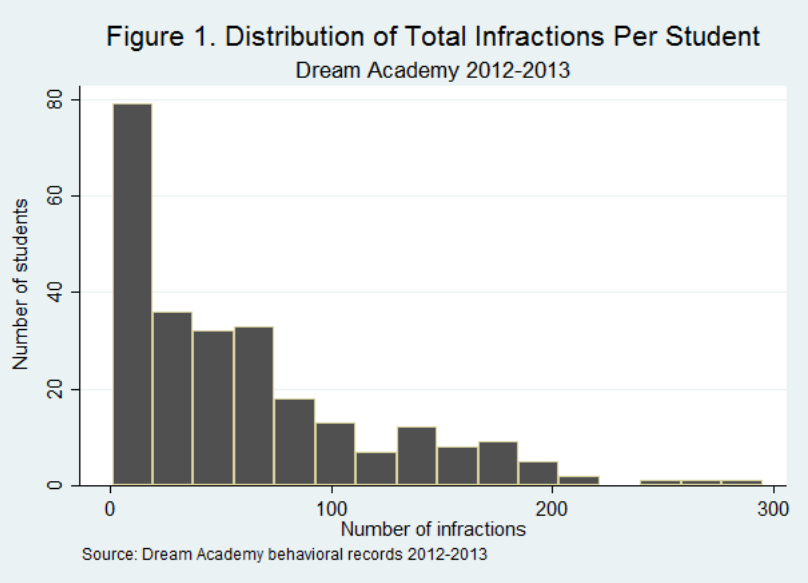
In sum, the 3Cs—clarity, comprehensiveness, and consequences—are distinct features of the no-excuses disciplinary approach. These disciplinary practices have a large impact on the everyday experiences of students. In the next section, I provide descriptive statistics of student infractions over the school year to show how discipline is central to everyday school life.

Student Behavior at a Glance

To keep track of infractions, Dream Academy relies on a computerized system called Discipline 101. This system was adopted from another no-excuses network that shared many of its practices and materials with Dream Academy staff when they were first implementing the no-excuses model (see Chapter 3). This system aids administrators in enforcing sweating-the-small-stuff practices because it tracks how many and what kinds of infractions teachers are administering to students. From these data, the school generates monthly behavioral reports that they distribute to teachers, ranking teachers (by name) in terms of the number and percent of

total infractions assigned that month. These data are used to evaluate teachers to make sure they fall in line with the school's behavioral practices and are regularly discussed in staff meetings.

In the 2012-2013 school year, teachers assigned a total of 15,445 infractions to the school's 257 students. Students on average received 60 infractions (standard deviation=58) over 188 days, or approximately 1 infraction every 3 days. Students ranged from a low of 1 infraction over the school year to a high of 295 infractions. Half of students received over 48 infractions, one-quarter over 82, and 5 percent over 176 (see Figure 1 for distribution of infractions). Students' infractions resulted in an average of 41 after-school detentions for behavior (SD=29), and 43 after-school detentions for not submitting homework (SD=33).[19] Distributing infractions evenly across the school year, this amounts to one behavioral detention and one homework detention every week.[20]



[19]The average student (median) received 35 behavioral detentions and 35 homework detentions during the school year.

[20]If students received both a homework and behavioral detention on the same day, they served only one detention that day.

Figure 2 presents the frequencies of different types of infractions.[21] When teachers input the infraction into the system, they choose from this detailed list of infractions. The numbers to the right of the infraction indicate the level of severity of the behavior.[22] Category 1 offenses (warning) are for minor misbehaviors like making unnecessary noise, putting a head down in a desk, or being off-task. In class, teachers typically issue warnings by writing students' initials on the board, or giving a verbal or nonverbal sign (e.g., "that's a 1" or putting one finger up). Students who receive a warning lose behavioral points but often also lose classroom participation points, yet another consequence for their behavior. Students who are given a warning for being off-task, for example, may see a drop in their daily participation grade from 100% to 75%. Poor participation marks can have a strong negative impact on students' course grades, as class work and participation comprise from 15 to 30 percent of a student's grade.

Category 2 offenses include not following directions, not submitting homework, and minor displays of disrespect, like rolling one's eyes or sucking one's teeth. These infractions result in an after-school detention, which lasts an hour and takes place in the third-floor cafeteria. Detention is not a time for students to hang out and chat with each other, nor does the school permit teachers to tutor students during this time. Instead, students, spaced out across the tables and facing the same direction, are expected to work silently on their homework. All detentions are served on the same day that the infraction is received. At the end of the school day, teachers receive a printout from the computerized system with the names of the students who must serve detention. The printout is a ritual of sorts, as students try to see who is on the list, argue that they should not be on the list, and even steal and hide the list. Sometimes, teachers have to do a fair

[21]15,042 out of 15,445 infractions were categorized by type.
[22]Note Tardy and Minor Disrespect were not assigned a level. Sixty-three percent of cases of Minor Disrespect resulted in a behavioral detention (level 2).

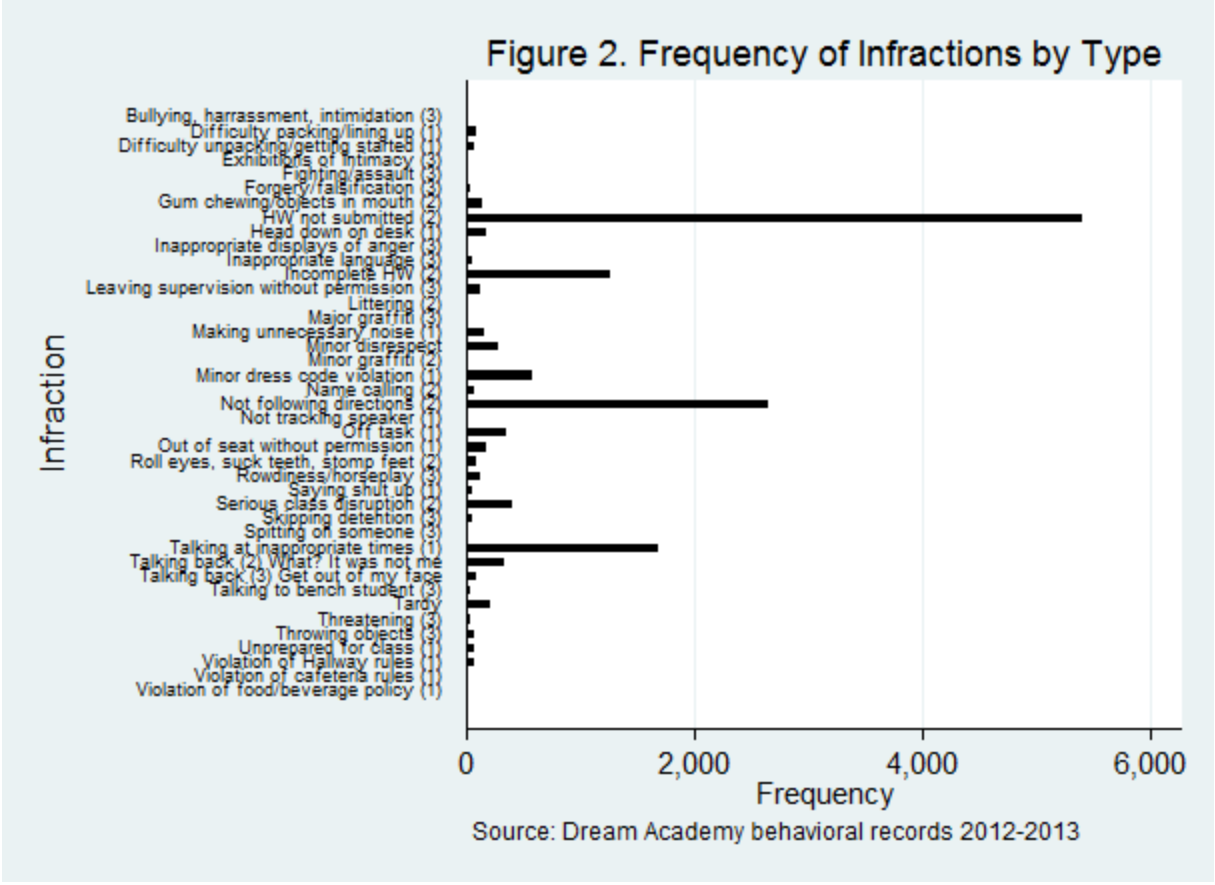
amount of cajoling to get students to go to detention. If students skip detention, they are benched, a practice I discuss next.

Category 3 offenses, for very serious behavior, result in a referral to the student affairs dean who typically places students on the bench, a form of in-school suspension started by the KIPP schools.[23] Students on bench must wear a yellow bench shirt and carry a clipboard with goals they must meet in each class in order to be released from bench. Unlike in some schools, benched students are not physically separated from the rest of their class—they continue to sit in their regular seats—but they are not allowed to talk to other students, must eat lunch separately, and cannot participate in gym or after-school clubs or activities. Students can be on the bench for one or more days. Students can be benched for multiple minor offenses, as well as for leaving the classroom without permission, skipping detention, and serious displays of disrespect like talking back to a teacher.

Intolerable behavior results in an immediate suspension and possible referral or expulsion. These behaviors include sexual harassment, fighting, stealing, and possession of alcohol or drugs. Suspensions in no-excuses schools are high and controversial. From 2011-2012, New York City charter schools suspended students at almost three times the rate of traditional public schools, with several of the largest no-excuses charter networks suspending more than 20% of their students at least once (Decker & Darville, 2015). According to a recent report released by Advocates for Children of New York (2015), 65% of the 164 charter school discipline policies they reviewed violated state law because they permitted suspension or

[23]Bench, initially called "porch" originated from KIPP Houston's school mascot, Big Dog, and their motto, "If you can't keep up with the big dogs, stay back on the porch." Students who were porched had to wear their shirts turned inside out, could not interact with their peers, had to ask permission from teachers to enter and exit rooms, and could not participate in lunch with their peers or gym class (Jones, 2004). Bench continues to be a common disciplinary practice used by no-excuses schools (Goodman, 2013; Lake et al., 2012).

expulsion as a penalty for any infraction in their discipline policy, no matter how minor. Suspensions were much lower at Dream Academy because the school preferred to use in-school suspensions (bench) instead of out-of-school suspensions so as not to take students away from instruction. In the 2012-2013 annual report to the state, Dream Academy reported 18 students suspended in grades 5-8 and no students expelled. In the past, suspensions have been higher. In the school's second and third years, 15% and 17% of students received suspensions. School leaders argued that higher suspensions were necessary to establish school culture at the start but subsequently have aimed to lower suspension rates.



The most common infractions during the 2012-2013 school year were for not submitting homework (N=5,399), not following directions (N=2,653), talking at inappropriate times (N=1,687), and submitting incomplete homework (N=1,265). The school had very few major

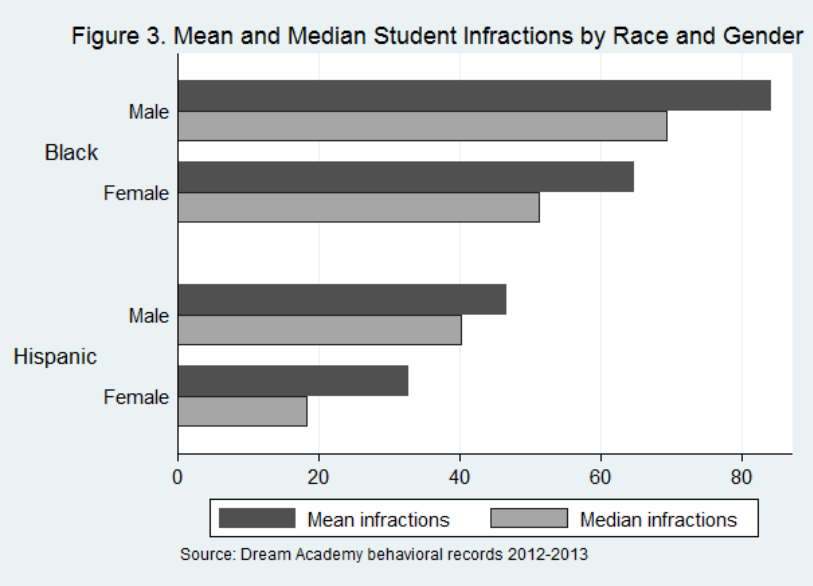
infractions, such as fighting (N=5), major graffiti (N=3), or bullying (N=1), although students received infractions for throwing objects (N=72), serious class disruption (N=412), and rowdiness/horseplay (N=117). Without a comparison case, we cannot assess how much the school's behavioral practices reduced serious misbehaviors, but these low counts of serious incidents suggest that the sweating-the-small-stuff practices curtailed more serious behavioral incidents.

Infractions like difficulty packing/lining up (N=87), head down on desk (N=175), and not tracking the speaker (N=24) reflect the sweating-the-small-stuff approach. These frequencies are not high, but they undercount the actual number of infractions assigned in class. This undercount is evident in the distribution of consequences. Nearly three-quarters (73%) of infractions resulted in detention (more than half of these were mandatory homework detentions), 21% resulted in loss of behavioral points (a warning), and 4% led to a referral to the student affairs dean.[24] Teachers typically issued warnings before they gave out detentions, so loss of behavioral points should account for a much higher percentage of infractions. Teachers, however, found it time-consuming to upload infractions into the computerized disciplinary system and thus tended to input detentions—which they had to input in order for students to receive detention—over warnings. In several leadership meetings I attended, school leaders discussed how to get teachers to more consistently input infractions, especially level 1 infractions. During teacher observations, they also compared the initials of students written on the board with the names inputted into the Discipline 101 system to check whether teachers were consistently using the system.

The disciplinary system was a central part of all students' experiences. But Black males on average accumulated the most infractions, consistent with prior research on school discipline

[24]Other consequences included community service, a conference with parents, a conference with students, lunch detention, and a phone call home.

(Ferguson, 2001; Losen, 2014). Figure 3 shows the mean and median infractions by race and gender for Black and Hispanic students. Black males received the highest mean and median infractions, followed by Black females, Hispanic males, and lastly, Hispanic females.



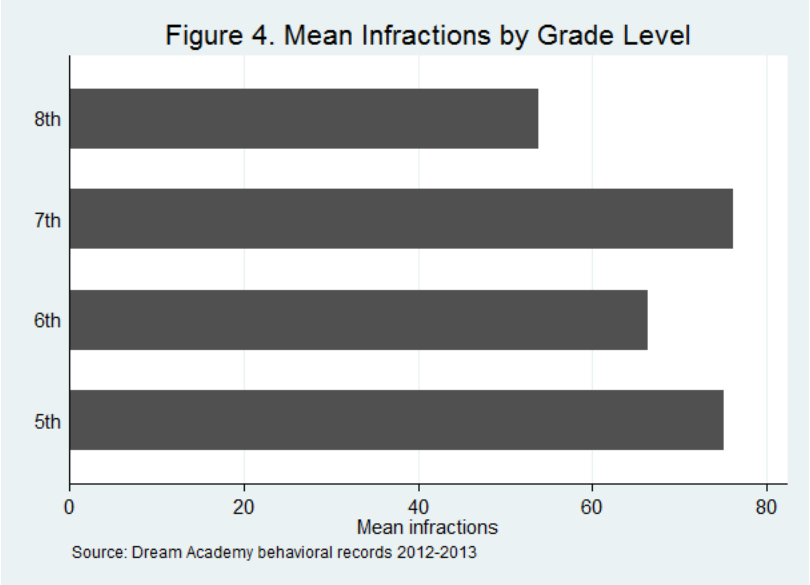
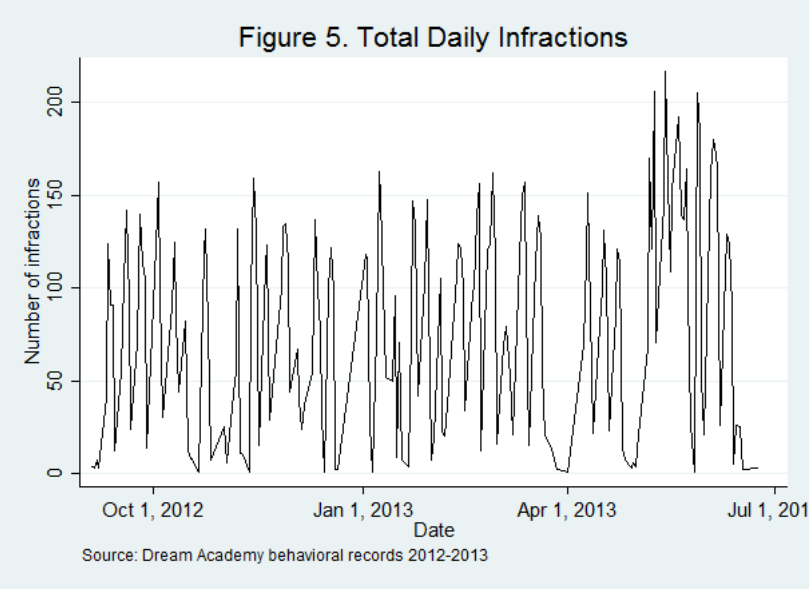


Figure 4 shows average infractions by grade. Seventh graders, on average, received the most infractions, consistent with school leaders' perceptions of a decline in behavior in seventh grade that they referred to as the "seventh grade slump." Fifth graders had the second highest average number of infractions and eighth graders had the lowest. From my observations, it was

not apparent that eighth graders objectively behaved better than fifth graders, but teachers were more consistent in sweating the small stuff with younger students.

The number of infractions assigned was fairly consistent over the school year, although it varied by day (Figure 5).[25] On average, teachers assigned 82 infractions per day, with a range from 1 to 219. There was an uptake in infractions near the end of the year. During the middle of May, school leaders reinforced the importance of enforcing school rules to ensure that student behavior did not deteriorate as the end of the school year neared.[26] They initiated a silent hallway competition between the lower- and upper-middle school that lasted several weeks, which resulted in teachers carrying around clipboards to track infractions. This likely explains the increase in recorded infractions observed during those weeks.



The sheer volume of infractions assigned gives us a sense of the salience of Dream Academy's disciplinary practices for students, teachers, and administrators. At first glance, the

[25] We see the same pattern by week so the variation does not seem to be driven by teachers assigning more consequences on certain days of the week.
[26] "If we start being inconsistent and lax about things, it's gonna be a rough end of the year," Ms. Williams told the teachers in a May 16 staff meeting.

level of infractions gives the impression that Dream Academy is a chaotic and unsafe school. But a closer look reveals that student misdeeds hardly seem consequential: talking out of turn or not following directions, rather than skipping class, fighting, or assaulting a teacher. Now that we have an understanding of the content and scope of the school's disciplinary system, I turn in the remaining chapters to examine the costs and benefits of these practices for administrators, students, and teachers.

CHAPTER 3: COPYING SUCCESS

On the first day of new teacher orientation, Mr. Taylor, a genial Black man in his mid-40s, told the history of Dream Academy's founding. It began with the story of City Charter School, a charter school in the city that had been closed for poor performance. Directing the two-dozen or so teachers' attention to the overhead projector, he gestured to a video: "It looked like this."

To the tune of "Welcome to the Jungle," the YouTube clip showed mostly Black high school students pushing each other in the hallway, dealing drugs, and breaking windows. This was not City Charter School, he clarified, but the opening scene of *Lean on Me*, a 1980s movie about a failing inner-city school. "When I was principal of City Charter School, that kind of chaos reigned in my building under my leadership," Mr. Taylor explained. "We had regular fights. We had students who tried to burn down the school, students who brought weapons, teachers who would quit in the middle of the school year, teachers who would work for a month, even teachers who worked for half a day." Halfway into his first year as a principal, Mr. Taylor tried to quit twice but had his resignation rescinded. His troubles were not new. In 11 years, City Charter School had cycled through 13 principals.

In what he describes as an epiphany, Mr. Taylor was sitting at his desk one day and remembered visiting a successful urban school. Sending two of his staff to the school, he told them to take careful notes because "whatever they're doing, we're doing it." One of his staff members cried when she got there because she was so impressed. The school was North Star Academy in Newark, New Jersey, winner of the National Blue Ribbon award, an honor bestowed by the U.S. Department of Education on the best schools in the country. The school

was also a no-excuses school. By copying and implementing their practices, Mr. Taylor saw his own school transformed within a year.

Why do school administrators adopt the no-excuses disciplinary system? In this chapter, I examine Dream Academy's founding, using its history and subsequent struggles to better understand how and why the no-excuses disciplinary model has spread. While previous research has taken a top-down approach, focusing on the role of corporate philanthropists and education entrepreneurs in pushing neoliberal reforms from the outside, I show how these reforms solve a real problem for school administrators on the ground. In the second half of the chapter, I identify challenges that emerge from copying a one-size-fits-all model, foreshadowing the potential costs to students and teachers that I will address in later chapters.

This chapter considers the perspective of school leaders, those who set and enforce school disciplinary practices and policies. I use the terms "school leaders" and "school administrators" interchangeably, as principals often taught or co-taught a class, while teachers took on additional leadership responsibilities in exchange for a reduced teaching load. Because few studies have been conducted on no-excuses school leaders, we know little about why they chose the no-excuses model, what struggles they face in implementing the model, and how they make sense of it. For the many critiques launched against no-excuses schools, there have been few studies that explore the model and methods from the perspective of those who embrace it. By considering the viewpoints of school leaders, I offer new insights into how no-excuses disciplinary practices relate to the success—and struggles—of these schools.

Charter Schools, CMOs, and Neoliberal Reform

The most significant trend in education reform in the past two decades, and arguably the past century, has been a shift towards neoliberalism. If one were to browse recent books on

education, neoliberalism often surfaces as the villain (Apple, 2006; Lipman, 2003; Ravitch, 2013a; Saltman & Gabbard, 2011). Briefly, neoliberalism argues that the free market can better address social problems than the government, which tends toward bureaucracy and inefficiencies. The neoliberal argument for school failure is that schools, mired in red tape and constrained by powerful teacher unions, lack incentives to improve. Neoliberal advocates argue that making education resemble a competitive marketplace, where schools must produce results to attract students and families, will improve education on its own, accomplishing what decades of reform have failed to achieve (Chubb & Moe, 1990; Friedman, 1997). Critics, on the other hand, argue that neoliberal policies undermine the democratic aims of education, hurt the under-resourced, and turn education into a product—test scores—rather than a process (Apple, 2006; Lipman, 2003; Ravitch, 2013a; Saltman & Gabbard, 2011).

Charter schools have become a central component of this neoliberal agenda. As public schools that operate under a charter, or contract, from a charter authorizer (typically a local school board or the state), charter schools are freed from many regulations governing traditional public schools. Charter school advocates argue that charter schools give schools the freedom to innovate; generate competition among schools; and provide families with the opportunity to find the right match between their child and the school (Chubb & Moe, 1990). In 1991, Minnesota passed the first charter school law. Charter schools have since grown rapidly, with over 400 new schools opening in the 2015-2016 school year (National Alliance for Public Charter Schools, 2016). In 2015-2016, over 6,800 charter schools served 2.9 million students, a six-fold increase in enrollment in the past 15 years (National Alliance for Public School Charters, 2016). In 2012-2013, compared to 23% of traditional public schools, 36% of charter schools were high-poverty

schools, with at least 75% of their students qualifying for free or reduced-price lunch (U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2015).

While early charter schools were single schools run by individual parents, teachers, or community members (Bulkley & Fisler, 2003), charter schools are increasingly dominated by a small network of operators. In 2015-2016, 25% of charter schools were operated by charter management organizations (CMOs), nonprofit organizations that manage a network of charter schools, while 15% were run by education management organizations (EMOs), their for-profit equivalent. CMOs and EMOs oversee several schools, setting goals and standardizing practices, providing legal and financial support, and implementing expansion strategies (Lake et al., 2010). They grant schools some autonomy but tend to be fairly prescriptive (Lake et al., 2010). While not all CMOs subscribe to a no-excuses approach, Lake et al. (2010) found that slightly more than half of CMOs require their schools to use a school-wide behavior system based on incentives and consequences. Moreover, many of the highest performing CMOs follow a no-excuses approach (Furgeson et al., 2012). Thus, charter schools were started as a way to diversify educational options, they are converging around a similar set of no-excuses practices.

To explain the narrowing of the charter field around the no-excuses model, critics have argued that "an elite network of privately sponsored organizations and individuals" have pushed a neoliberal agenda in education, "potentially disenfranchising the voices of community members and educational professionals" (Kretchmar, Sondel, & Ferrare, 2014, p. 742). This network includes powerful White philanthropists, venture capitalists, and politicians who apply the strategies that have brought them success in the private sector to education reform (Scott, 2009). Between 1999 and 2009, corporate foundations including the Walton Family Foundation, Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, Fisher Fund, Dell Foundation, and Broad Foundation spent

approximately $500 million to support the development of CMOs to expand and replicate successful charter schools (Farrell et al., 2012; Lake et al., 2010). In addition, the U.S. Department of Education has provided $50 million to support CMOs, and also allows chronically underperforming public schools to reopen under the management of a CMO or EMO (see Farrell et al., 2012). It can be difficult for community-based charter schools to compete with national CMOs or EMOs, particularly those that can demonstrate a proven record of success (K. L. Henry & Dixson, 2016).

Teach for America has been criticized for being a key player in this "education entrepreneur network"(Kretchmar et al., 2014). In a network analysis, Kretchmar et al. (2014) found that Teach for America provides many connections between no-excuses networks, organizations supporting charter schools, school districts, and state education departments. For example, KIPP was founded by two TFA alumni, and half its school leaders and one-third of its teachers are TFA alumni. TFA also places many of its teachers in charter schools; in New York City, over half its corps members teach in charters. In 2010-2011, 85% of Fisher Fellows, the leadership program that trains KIPP leaders, were TFA alumni .

I do not disagree that an elite network of foundations, organizations, and individuals has been instrumental in expanding the no-excuses model. The story of post-Katrina New Orleans, where over 90 percent of public school students are enrolled in charter schools, provides a strong case for the argument that outsiders have advanced and imposed neoliberal reforms on marginalized communities (K. L. Henry & Dixson, 2016). Moreover, if no-excuses schools were not charter schools, it is not clear that they would have received the same level of support for their expansion. Yet, standing in front of a room of new teachers, Mr. Taylor tells a different story about Dream Academy's founding. His is not a story of corporate reform or neoliberal

ideology, but one of desperation and mimicry. By examining his story and experiences, we can gain a different perspective into why school leaders adopted the no-excuses model and what its strict disciplinary systems accomplish.

Copying What Works

Mr. Taylor fits the education entrepreneur profile. He is well-educated, a graduate of a very selective liberal arts college and a prestigious master's program in public policy. He has encountered problems with the educational bureaucracy. When he first graduated from college, he wanted to be a social studies teacher in an urban school. After going through the state's alternative teaching certification process,[27] he sent an application to every urban teacher opening in the state. He heard back from only one school district, which, upon hiring him, was unable to tell him what subject he would be teaching until two weeks before the start of the school year, leading him to turn down the position. Mr. Taylor has also worked for or served on the board of a number of alternative education organizations, including the Edison Schools (one of the first EMOs), Teach for America, and a state charter school advisory council. With the exception of a few months in which he briefly enrolled as a Ph.D. student, he has not studied education in a traditional university program nor has he worked as a teacher. While these factors place Mr. Taylor squarely in the education entrepreneur network, he is also Black, the first in his family to attend college; he grew up in an urban environment; and he worked with different school

[27]While alternative certification programs now comprise approximately 30 percent of the 2,124 teacher preparation programs offered in the United States, the vast majority (88%) of teachers enroll in traditional programs (U.S. Department of Education, 2011). Traditional programs are those offered at colleges and universities that lead to a bachelor's or master's degree. Alternative programs often target individuals who lack certain teaching credentials (e.g., second-career teachers). There is some debate about the usefulness of the terms alternative and traditional because there is wide variation within each category (Zeichner, Cochran-Smith, & others, 2005).

districts for several years in an administrative capacity. Thus, he does not share the typical demographic profile of the elite White reformer.

After working for over a decade in education, Mr. Taylor had imagined himself prepared to lead a school. He was given an opportunity when a struggling urban school needed a principal to fill in at the end of the school year. He described his experience at City Charter School as "educational malpractice." Every two to three days, someone pulled the fire alarm. One second grader came to school with bullets. Another student came to school with a razor blade hidden in his mouth. One student try to knife another student in his office, directly in front of him. Mr. Taylor knew his students were not learning, and he saw himself presiding over the chaos. "I was struggling with the question of what do I do, how do we fix this, how do we make this thing better? What, what can we do?" he recounted. "And I don't know why it occurred now, I don't know how it occurred to me, the thought occurred to me, wait a second, I've been somewhere that it's working."

What is shocking for many teachers and administrators who work in urban schools is not the scarce resources, which Jonathon Kozol (1991) famous labeled "savage inequalities," but the lack of adult control. Stories abound of students throwing chairs at teachers, cursing, fighting, breaking windows, and not learning much of anything. Creating order is the first goal of many urban school administrators, even if it is not their ultimate goal. Urban school leaders are desperate for something that works. When policymakers talk about what works, they are referring to what works for raising academic achievement. For example, the Department of Education maintains a What Works Clearinghouse and the DoingWhatWorks online resource, inventories of school practices that have been shown to increase student achievement through rigorous research studies. In copying what worked, Mr. Taylor, in contrast, was talking about

what works to keep order. Mr. Taylor admitted that the changes he made at City Charter School were implemented as much for control reasons as for academic reasons. "It was just we could not manage student conduct," he explained. He estimated that 80 percent of the changes his school made that pivotal year were cultural rather than academic—for example, having teachers escort students in straight lines through the hallway, greeting students at the door when they entered a classroom, and raising two fingers for silence. By copying no-excuses practices, he was able to establish order in his school. Although academic achievement did rise significantly as a result of this increased order, the primary reason for copying the no-excuses model was first to establish control.

Mr. Taylor was not driven to the no-excuses model because he embraced a neoliberal ideology, nor did he adopt a highly controlled environment because it was the easiest way to raise test scores. He was not single-mindedly pursuing academic achievement at any cost. Instead, Mr. Taylor and his colleagues copied techniques that had worked for other urban schools because he needed to keep order. Organizations tend to copy successful models when they face uncertainty about how to achieve goals and when there are fewer successful models in the field (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). Schools fit this criteria well. Given the diversity of student needs, there is no standard formula that can be applied to improve schools. Decades of reform have not significantly reduced racial and socioeconomic achievement gaps, demonstrating the difficulty of the task (Payne, 2008). Although schools have long copied structures and programs from each other, what is distinctive here is the copying of a comprehensive set of behavioral practices, not just a general disciplinary approach or a stand-alone curriculum. Mr. Taylor found that schools were very willing to share their model and materials with him, down to their teaching evaluation rubrics, student assessments, chants and hand signals, rewards and consequences, and

computerized disciplinary system. These successful schools sent the message: "If [other schools] wanted to then replicate it in their own typeface, go ahead."

Mr. Taylor drew up a charter for Dream Academy the summer after his successful turnaround at City Charter School. He decided to start his own charter school because he felt that his superintendent was not fully supportive of the direction he was taking the school. To get a sense of this disagreement, Ms. Johnson, a White teacher at Dream Academy who had worked under Mr. Taylor at City Charter School, described how the school culture dramatically shifted after Mr. Taylor left. Instead of receiving a huge binder of rules and procedures at the start of the school year, she was met with school administrators asking, "So, how do we want to do things?" The school went from having three fights a year to several fights in the first week with police officers being brought in. "There was no discipline at all. And no consequences," she recalled. "It was like a very much, just love, give them more love. You know, we need some toughness here." Within the first couple of weeks, many of the staff left, including a few teachers who just walked out of their classrooms and never came back.

In Dream Academy's charter school application, Mr. Taylor and his colleagues explain that they are copying the "no excuses approach" used by high-achieving urban schools like KIPP, North Star Academy in Newark, Amistad Academy in New Haven, and Boston Collegiate Charter School. "Our mission and program draw on the program, plans and procedures used by a set of highly successful, high-poverty, random-selection urban middle schools from across the country," the charter states. They report consulting research on no-excuses schools, reviewing plans and practices of other schools, making site visits, and engaging in frequent communications with no-excuses school leaders.

"We just didn't have any, you know, big egos or anything," explained Ms. Scott, one of the staff members who departed with Mr. Taylor to help write the charter. "And we saw this was working. And so it's not like we sat in a room and, you know—"

"And thought about what would be the best model," I offered.

"Yeah, let's—let's—let's think about this being, you know, and kind of see what makes it—no, it was like wow, this works? Let's do it."

Over time, Mr. Taylor has learned how to learn. He believes that what school leaders do is a function of learning from other people. Each year, his staff visits different urban schools around the country to observe and adopt best practices. As a leader, he encourages his team to learn from each other and from others. "Let's talk about what we've seen work, and let's talk about how we can find out what works," he said. "Let's talk about what we see in ourselves that worked and try to replicate it." He contrasts this approach to "let me sit here and just conceptualize what should work." I laugh because I think of myself as the researcher, conceptualizing what should work. He catches on and corrects himself, "No, no, no, no, I mean, that's wonderful."

A Series of Structures

Critics argue that the corporate influence in education has produced a model of *education as enforcement* (Saltman & Gabbard, 2011). The highly regimented disciplinary system found in no-excuses schools is understood as part of a broader set of neoliberal practices of standardization, routinization, and efficiency—imitating corporate practices in an effort to raise test scores (Lack, 2009; Saltman, 2009; Saltman & Gabbard, 2011). While I agree that no-excuses discipline follows a model of education as enforcement, I found that school leaders adopted the disciplinary system not from a corporate mindset but from a practical need. They

arrived at a standardized, routinized, and efficient system by copying what worked, not conceptualizing what should work.

From his experience at City Charter School, Mr. Taylor learned that urban schools needed to be much more hands-on than he had at first assumed. College practices, where students take responsibility for their own learning, did not translate to an urban context. "College students just do what they're supposed to do far more frequently than in a setting of an urban public school," he explained. In an urban context, school staff needed to take a more proactive role in setting and enforcing precise expectations. "An important, I think, failure on my part… and on the part of many public schools is the failure to understand that the adult has to assert," Mr. Taylor declared. "If the adults want a certain outcome, the adults have to put in a whole series of structures that will lead to that particular outcome."

Mr. Taylor was not alone in discovering that what worked in urban education was rigid structures and step-by-step instructions. I found that both middle-school principals had reached a similar conclusion through their own experiences in urban schools. Mr. Bradley, a 34-year-old White man raised in rural Pennsylvania, had his own epiphany as a Teach for America teacher. Teaching for two years in a struggling urban school in the South Bronx changed his perspective about his future and how to teach. Having grown up in a family of modest means, he explained that his first goal had been to make a lot of money. After studying finance in college, he worked in financial services for two years. Then, one day, "I just kind of woke up one morning and had a quarter-life crisis and said why am I doing this." He applied to Teach for America, in part, because he thought the experience would help make his application to a top business school stand out.

His TFA experience opened his eyes to the problems of urban education. He described his South Bronx school as "a really, really bad institution of learning." Four principals cycled through during his two-year commitment. The school lacked a common vision, and teachers largely were left to fend for themselves. To give people a sense of the environment, he shared stories about how students ran laps around the hallways after lunch until security guards pushed them into their classrooms, slamming the door behind them.

Of the 20 or so teachers in his school, Mr. Bradley found that only three had control over their classrooms—he was not one of them. Like Mr. Taylor, he found himself desperate for a solution and began to observe the successful teachers. One was a long-time teacher with over 30 years of experience and the other two had military backgrounds. Mr. Bradley learned the most from the military teachers, one who was also a first-year TFA teacher, which he found duly impressive. "[The teachers] were like, yeah, you got to build it, you know, break them down and then build them back up in what you expect and being very, very precise in what you're looking for," he recalled. Following their techniques, he was able to gain control over his classroom, turning it around his first year and having a successful second year. He learned to be very strict and precise, having students repeat procedures until they met his expectations.

Ms. Williams, who was promoted to principal during my fieldwork, experienced a similar learning curve as Mr. Bradley as a new TFA teacher in Newark. As a Black woman raised in an urban environment, she shared a closer background to her students, but faced similar challenges to Mr. Bradley. "I think it was the hardest thing I've ever done in my life," she told me. She found that her school had few structures to support teachers, either behaviorally or instructionally. Because the school lacked any real consequences for students' actions, students did what they wanted. She recalled once teaching a writing lesson with a student who kept

opening and slamming the door and calling her all sorts of names. “And I just did not know what to do,” she recounted. “I had no support whatsoever. They basically put the basal reader on my desk, put the standards on my desk, and said, ‘This is what you have to teach,’ and like I tried to figure it out.”

Without a role model, she started creating her own structures to help motivate students. She implemented a paycheck system, where students earned a paycheck each week based on homework, behavior, class work, and participation, similar to the system used by Dream Academy. “I don’t even know where I got the template from—probably from TFA.net or something,” she said. Every Friday, students could exchange their paycheck for fake dollars to spend at her school store, which she stocked with footballs, nail polish, lip gloss, and other items she had bought from the $5 and Below. Students also had the option of saving their paycheck, and she fondly recalled how her students would save their money for something special. “They would save their money so that when holidays came around and, you know, they had events or their family member had a birthday, like they would get something for them out of the store with their money,” she remembered. “Or they had little brothers and sisters and like after school on Fridays they would bring them upstairs and let them pick out what they wanted and give me the money for it.”

Echoing the “no excuses” mantra, she noticed that students always had excuses for not doing their homework. To address the problem, she had students who had not completed their homework stand up and recite a poem to the class: “Excuses are tools for the incompetent. They are used to fill monuments of nothingness. And those who specialize in their uses are seldom capable of anything else.” By adding this embarrassing consequence, she found that missing homework dramatically declined.

Ms. Williams stayed at her school an additional two years after her TFA commitment. It was a difficult decision to leave but she felt like she was in one of those "school-to-prison pipeline" schools. "This was a dropout factory; this was a school that was, by no means, helping kids to be successful," she said. Moreover, she wanted more support to become a better teacher. The last four years, she had basically taught herself everything she knew. When she saw the mission for Dream Academy, she felt, "it's just totally me." She had never heard of no-excuses schools before, although the KIPP schools had tried to recruit her when she had nearly completed her second year with Teach for America, what she said was common practice. In 2010, she started as an English teacher at Dream Academy, and within six months, was promoted to a team leader, and later, instructional dean and principal.

Mr. Taylor, Mr. Bradley, and Ms. Williams can all be seen as education entrepreneurs, having each taken alternative routes into teaching and formed ties with Teach for America. Yet their experiences tell a different story about why they embraced the no-excuses model. Through their failures trying to manage urban schools and classrooms, Dream Academy's school leaders learned that they needed to create a series of structures; they needed to script the moves. For Mr. Bradley and Ms. Williams, as well as several other teachers who had taught in urban schools, it was an easy transition to Dream Academy's no-excuses disciplinary system. Its emphasis on setting very specific expectations, sweating the small stuff, and enforcing behaviors with rewards and consequences was very familiar. After all, it systematized what they had been doing all along in their own classrooms.

Why it Works

In her classic ethnography of two desegregated junior high schools in the 1960s, Mary Haywood Metz (1979) outlines two different approaches to order. The first, the

institutionalization of innocence, depends on students' acceptance of procedure, awe of adults, and fear of disapproval. She argues that this method only works when students share common norms and goals with the school. This is similar to Durkheim's (1893) idea of "mechanical solidarity" whereby a community keeps order by socializing its members into collective norms. The second approach, the *myth of coercive control*, relies on "swift and consistent use of coercive sanctions" (p. 154). Teachers punish minor infractions harshly and early in the semester, making the cost of noncompliance very high. This type of school requires "constant regimentation and constant vigilance by the staff" (p. 97) to maintain the myth that the school actually has the power to enforce order when they in fact have few resources to do so. College students who show up for class abide by the first approach; Dream Academy students who are escorted in silent, straight lines through the hallways fall under the second.

Metz argues that a school's strategy for establishing order is dependent on the demographics of its student population. She posits that students from low-income, minority backgrounds may be less willing to accept school procedures and thus may respond better to a more punitive approach. As other scholars have argued, students who are not from White, middle-class backgrounds may be less familiar with school standards and have a less concrete understanding of the returns of education, making them less likely to unthinkingly accept school norms (Ogbu, 2003; Willis, 1977). Mr. Bradley believed that different types of students required different approaches. When he worked as a principal of an English-immersion school in the Dominican Republic following his TFA experience, his school had a very different philosophy because it had a very different student population with very different needs. While he believed that project-based learning or other progressive approaches might work somewhere, he had never seen them work in an urban environment. For his students, he has not found a better alternative

to the no-excuses approach. “The part that I, you know, is hard for us is I haven’t seen anything else in an urban environment that works,” Mr. Bradley asserted. “I really haven’t.”

Mr. Taylor has a theory of tipping points (Granovetter & Soong, 1988). He posits that, in a suburban classroom, one or two students may not follow school norms, but they are kept in check by the rest of their classmates. In an urban classroom, five, six, or seven of these norm-breakers start shifting the classroom in their own direction, producing a level of activity and disruption that is inconsistent with traditional learning practices. “That’s just a function of everything that comes with an urban environment: poverty, lots of family changes, persons going off to prison or somebody, you know, a parent passing away or a parent’s in the life who disappears, or a job relocation, or a house relocation, or whatever,” he explained in an interview. In his view, the adults need to engage in practices that do not allow these five or six students to set the norm. What the adults in the building think should be the norm must become the norm—and that requires the adults to be very proactive, or in Metz’s terms, coercive.

If we put together these ideas, we can come to a new understanding of what the no-excuses disciplinary system accomplishes. Although no-excuses leaders talk about maximizing instructional time through efficient routines, I found that this aim was subsidiary to the basic purpose of keeping order. In fact, the school’s disciplinary practices sometimes took away from learning as teachers wasted a significant amount of instructional time addressing behaviors. One principal of a no-excuses school, for example, estimated that teachers spent 40% of instructional time re-establishing norms and routines in the weeks following holiday break (Lake et al 2012 28). Rather than viewing the no-excuses disciplinary system as a highly efficient and rational set of practices designed to raise test scores—the embodiment of a corporate, neoliberal logic—it might be more accurate to view these practices as a way to reset behavioral norms. The no-

excuses disciplinary system gets students into their seats, establishing a minimum level of order to enable teaching and learning to happen. Instead of constantly putting out fires—metaphorical and literal—administrators and teachers can direct their attention towards teaching.

If we understand the school disciplinary system as controlling the chaos typical of many urban schools, we can make sense of Dobbie and Fryer's findings (2011b) that there is nothing mysterious about no-excuses schools. Dobbie and Fryer found that no-excuses disciplinary practices are not significantly related to student achievement; rather, the academic success of these schools is driven by practices such as data-driven instruction, extended instructional time, high dosage tutoring, intensive professional development, and high expectations. As Ms. Stewart, the high school principal, explained, the school's disciplinary practices are the minimum. "What really works is high academic expectations," she said. "It's building relationships: caring about these students, believing in them. It's listening to them. It's getting to know a student enough to motivate them. Even learning styles: it's not obvious that this direct instruction is the best for their students either." While a sweating-the-small-stuff approach can promote student achievement by establishing order, schools that find alternative ways to establish order can be equally successful (Dobbie & Fryer, 2011b). But it is a challenge to find a model that establishes order without shared norms or coercive control.

When One Size Does Not Fit All

Adding support to my interpretation that school administrators are not simply pushing a neoliberal agenda, I found that school leaders shared broad goals for their students. They cared about test scores, but they entered education to make a difference in students' lives. The school's mission statement, which all the staff had to memorize, was to prepare all students academically for college *and* to instill in them the school's core character values. Mr. Bradley left business

because he wanted to do something about the problem of education. Mr. Taylor feels tremendous pride in getting to be part of his students' success and hearing about what they have done. "The biggest benefit, bar none, is getting to know the students," he told me. Ms. Williams most clearly defined success as getting kids to communicate effectively and constructively with adults so that they can make social changes. She understood the importance of giving students voice. In her predominantly White high school located in an adjacent suburb, she constantly felt oppressed by teachers who had low expectations for her, and wanted to empower her own students. "We want to get kids to that social justice and social change avenue," she articulated. "However, we can't get them there until they start to recognize how powerful they really are; how powerful their voices are, how powerful the choices that they make are." She envisions a school that is less hierarchical, a learning community of kids and adults. She loved her college experience at a historically Black college, "how they teach, what they teach; they push you to critically think and analyze and give you all parts of the story, not just one part of the story." Her classes were discussion-based and used active, experiential learning.

By copying the no-excuses model, school leaders solved their most pressing problem of school chaos but found themselves confronting a new set of problems. In this next section, I discuss the challenges school leaders faced and the compromises they made in adopting a standardized, sweating-the-small-stuff disciplinary system. Three major challenges were: meeting the needs of all kids, balancing consistency with discretion, and modifying the system without losing control. I introduce these problems here and return to them in the chapters on students and teachers.

Not For All Kids

My first intuition was that the no-excuses model was intended to help students who struggled with their behavior. A student who already can listen to the teacher and sit still does not need strict monitoring and stringent rules, but a student who lacks self-control may benefit from greater structures. Yet school leaders explained how their system works best for students who are already well-behaved. "So people who can attend to the teacher really well, who can walk in straight lines really easily, who can sit still and do homework for long periods of time, we work really, really well for those people," Mr. Taylor explained. "For the people for whom that's not their natural state of being, it's really, really, really difficult."

Struggling students are easy to spot. They are constantly being addressed for their behaviors, spend day after day in detention, and get left behind when their friends go on school field trips. School leaders identified several categories of students whom they struggle to serve—students who have trouble sitting still or paying attention, students with disabilities or special needs, students and families who desire a less adult-directed environment, and even Black males. These students might benefit from a school that takes a more individualized approach to student behavior or uses more hands-on, collaborative learning. As Metz (1979) argues, students who cause the most problems for order are typically those most in need of a less ordered environment where they can receive individual attention.

Remarking that hers may be an unpopular opinion, Ms. Scott, the student affairs dean, told me that consequences do not change student behavior. "I know punishment doesn't work, like punishment never works," she reflected. While she acknowledged that consequences could prevent a student from acting out, she believed they only worked to a certain extent and not for every person. As a child, she grew up poor, behaved badly, and got bad grades. She spent many

days sitting silently and facing a wall during school, not interacting with other kids and writing out the dictionary, consequences that many no-excuses schools use. It did not change her behavior. What worked was "developing different tools to do things differently" and finding a teacher who believed in her. Her final year in high school, she had a teacher who thought she was smart, and moved her to an honors class. For the first time, she made honor roll. From there, she developed a desire to work with kids that others had given up on. "I didn't want to go to school every day and get in trouble," she explained. "That wasn't my goal when I woke up in the morning and I know that's not the goal of the children who are here. They don't wake up and say, 'Well, let me, you know, act the fool because I'm angry.'"

The no-excuses disciplinary system provides a level of control that prevents disruptive students from derailing the class, but in her eyes, it does not help these particularly troublesome students to change their behaviors. The school, for example, found that the same group of Black boys were always in detention. Recognizing that rewards and consequences were not helping them, Ms. Johnson, a White teacher, used her own resources and time to start a mentoring program. Almost every Saturday for the entire school year, she took sometimes more than a dozen boys to football games and treated them to dinner. She pointed to the students' drop in behavioral infractions as evidence that her approach worked better than the school's approach. By the end of the year, one of the students she took under her wing earned a school trip for the first time in his five years at the school.

Dream Academy's structure as a charter school is an important factor for school leaders in resolving personal conflicts between wanting to serve all children and not feeling able to under the school's rigid disciplinary system. As a school of choice, they present themselves as one—but not the only—option for children. Ms. Scott explained that the purpose of charter

schools was to increase educational options, giving families the option to send their children to a school with few rules, or one that focuses on the sciences or music. "Like that's the beauty of the whole charter [movement]," she emphasized. Even with her own four children, she found that some of them thrived at Dream Academy while others struggled.

"There's no question, this is not a model for everyone," Mr. Taylor asserted. "We think that for the right families and for the right staff, for the right students … we believe that we are an excellent way to get a great education even if we're not for everybody." Mr. Taylor did not see the no-excuses school model as fully scalable precisely because these schools would no longer be schools of choice. Mr. Bradley echoed this sentiment that no-excuses schools were not intended to serve all children. "You know, I sometimes struggle because you want to be the structure and the school for everyone but it just doesn't work that way," Mr. Bradley said. "[The no-excuses model is] very structured, obviously. It's very, you know, direct instruction, guided practice, independent practice and there's not a whole lot of room for deviation from that."

This choice factor suggests that no-excuses schools cannot be a widespread solution to urban education, not only because of a limited pool of hard-working, highly educated teachers (S. F. Wilson, 2008; Yeh, 2013), but also because their harsh disciplinary practices would appear too coercive if students had no other options. For now, school leaders can make sense of their compromises through the lens of school choice. However, as no-excuses schools continue to expand, becoming the dominant charter school option in cities like Boston and New Orleans (Angrist et al., 2011; Carr, 2013), policymakers need to seriously consider the challenge of ensuring that these schools work for all students. It will be increasingly difficult to defend no-excuses disciplinary practices as a choice when families, like those I met waiting at Dream Academy's lottery, feel like they have no other options.

Balancing Consistency with Discretion

A second challenge that occupied school administrators was how to get teachers to correctly implement school disciplinary practices. One of the main responsibilities of school leaders is to train teachers to follow the school's behavioral system. Due to high levels of teacher turnover and the need to hire additional staff as the school expands, school leaders must induct new teachers into the school culture each year. Many have not taught before and few are familiar with the no-excuses approach. School leaders dedicate an enormous amount of time to ensure that teachers follow the school's disciplinary practices.

Consistency in administering school rules and procedures is a shared goal of no-excuses school leaders (Lake et al., 2012). School leaders believe that a school-wide, consistent disciplinary approach benefits teachers. Ms. Scott sees the disciplinary system as more for the adults than the kids. Although a rigid system may not best address the needs of individual students, it can help novice teachers manage their classrooms. At the same time, teachers who follow the school's behavioral practices too strictly are perceived by students as robotic and out to get them (see Chapter 5). Consistency must be balanced with discretion.

Experienced teachers know how and when to show discretion. They use a range of strategies to manage their classrooms, and recognize that there is no one-size-fits-all solution. Ms. Rivas, a Hispanic teacher who assisted with student affairs, gave an example of how one of her students got upset the other day because his last name began with W and he always got the worst pick of the textbooks. "I'm like, Micah, I've got you baby. I see why you're upset. You're a W and you always get the last pick so tomorrow trust me, I'm going to get your book." The next day, he came up quickly to the front of the line. She reassured him that she did not forget and he returned to the back of the line. "Whereas any other teacher, I mean, the way I could have

handled it was, why are you coming to the front of the line? That's not acceptable, points, detention. So, he just shuts down." Although the official school policy is to assign consequences for not following directions, Ms. Rivas understood that this would have led Micah to withdraw. Instead, she addressed the root of the problem.

Ms. Anderson is strict with her students but she modifies the system for certain students. She is more lenient with students who struggle with self-control; otherwise, these students would always be getting infractions even as they improved in behavior. She understands that she needs to walk a fine line between consistency and understanding, "learning how to manage sort of the no excuses, and the high behavioral expectations through the relationships that you do have." School leaders have developed relationships with students to know how to react in different situations, but teaching this balance to newer teachers is trickier. This challenge was made apparent in a staff workshop Ms. Anderson led for teachers on addressing minor misbehaviors.

"Can we define minor misbehavior?" Ms. Anderson asked the group of teachers. The teachers struggled for a definition, and Ms. Anderson agreed that it was hard to define.

"Something that creates a distraction without causing a disruption," one teacher suggested.

"Picking at an eraser, talking to a teammate quietly," Ms. Anderson offered as examples. "What are some other examples?"

This time, the teachers quickly accumulated a list: taking apart mechanical pencils and putting them back together, tapping hands and feet, talking when it's supposed to be silent, chair gazing, leaning back on a chair, calling out, humming, heads down, bad posture, rolling eyes, sucking teeth, "Fine!," "God!," "You annoy me!" The sweating-the-small-stuff approach is based on addressing these types of minor misbehaviors to curtail more serious misbehaviors.

Ms. Anderson explained three strategies for addressing minor misbehaviors, and then the group practiced using role-plays. Ms. Rivas volunteered for the first scenario. She told the student, who was played by another teacher, to leave the room and get a pass because she was late. When the student returned, she slammed the door, approached Ms. Rivas, held the pass to her face and sarcastically said, "Got your pass." In a matter of seconds, Ms. Rivas held the student's arm and sat her down in her desk.

Ms. Anderson asked for positive feedback. The teachers commended Ms. Rivas for not engaging with the student, for being very quick. "When you touched me, I didn't feel violated," said the teacher acting as the student. "I purposely did something negative," Ms. Rivas clarified, explaining how she would not have grabbed the student. "I would grab the pass, tap the desk to indicate that she wanted her seated."

Ms. Anderson talked about different levels of student comfort with physical touch, and then picked up on Ms. Rivas' decision not to assign a consequence. "I wouldn't have addressed the rudeness," Ms. Anderson agreed. "It's not worth having a conversation in the moment." She said that the teacher could address it afterwards in a private conversation with the student.

"Does that merit a consequence?" a new teacher asked, confused by why the students' rudeness was not addressed.

"That was the consequence: she nonverbally addressed you," Ms. Anderson explained. If the student had kept going with her misbehavior, then she would have taken away her points. "Stopping and putting consequences on board is engaging the student."

"Consequence is really a nebulous term," Ms. Anderson added. "We're fluid in the way we're thinking about it."

In this situation, Ms. Anderson tells teachers that she would not give out a formal consequence because it might exacerbate the situation and further disrupt the class. She would make a decision based on her interpretation of the situation and student. While this strategy seems appropriate, it sends a different message to teachers about how to handle behavior than the message of consistency that school leaders typically emphasized. For slamming the door and showing sarcasm toward the teacher, the student should have at least been written up for minor disrespect, signaled by putting the student's initials on the board. But even though they often push teachers to assign consequences, school leaders also recognize that managing student behavior is complex and not solved by a standardized system.

Given this tension between consistency and discretion, it is perhaps not surprising that some teachers felt that school leaders were sending contradictory messages about discipline. On the one hand, school leaders wanted to minimize discretion, and in fact, the following year, the school implemented a ladder of consequences that all teachers were supposed to follow. For every minor infraction, teachers were supposed to adhere to a sequence, beginning with a whole class reminder of the expected behavior and progressing to an individual warning, a detention, and so on. As Ms. Williams explained, "Your discretion depends on whether you're emotional that day, whether you're tired that day—discretion doesn't work." On the other hand, in their own practice, school leaders were not always consistent in giving out consequences but instead showed discretion as needed. The challenge was figuring out how to get teachers to consistently implement school practices without becoming inflexible and insensitive to student needs. "That's a million dollar question, right," Ms. Anderson reflected. "Like, how do you account for personal and individual differences in temperament, and student social-emotional state in an environment

that places such a high prize on consistency?" She looked at me. "That's hard, that's super hard. That's what you're here for."

Difficult to Modify

School leaders were not oblivious to the costs of the school's strictness, nor did they dismiss these costs as necessary to promoting achievement. But perhaps the greater challenge they faced was figuring out how to modify school practices. No-excuses schools present themselves as data-driven schools. Dream Academy sends monthly reports to their staff that provide comparative data on teachers' attendance rates, assignment of behavioral infractions, student health office referrals, parent teacher-conference participation rates, and even paper and copying usage. Five times each year, the school administers standardized tests for practice and devotes a full day to reviewing these data. Teachers use these data to decide which lessons to reteach, as well as how to differentiate students into small groups based on ability level. "I think we are always trying to make adjustments so that everything that we do is purposeful so that we're not doing anything that's extra or extraneous or not adding value," Mr. Taylor explained.

Yet, while the school made many adjustments to instruction, they rarely tampered with behavioral structures. I observed school leaders using data to assess whether teachers were giving out enough consequences, but I never saw them use data to assess the effectiveness or consequences of behavioral practices or policies. In my observations of staff and leadership meetings, I heard almost no discussion of modifying the school's behavioral practices. Staff meetings were used to clarify behavioral policies or to practice implementing behavioral practices, but were never used as a forum for debate. Participation in behavioral decisions rarely filtered down, even to teachers in leadership positions.

Why are school leaders so reluctant to make changes to school disciplinary practices? I argue that school leaders share a sense that the order they have established is fragile. They make sense of their actions through the lens of the counterfactual: the chaotic urban school that they have experienced and seek to avoid. Early in my fieldwork, Mr. Bradley told me to visit the local public schools so I could better understand what they were doing at Dream Academy. What he was implying was that no-excuses practices might seem crazy, but they were better than the alternative. Without being so vigilant, the school could turn into a typical chaotic urban school.

School leaders see school rules as a package deal, copied together, and only to be carefully tweaked. They believe that what makes the model work are its many detailed procedures and policies. When I asked Mr. Taylor to name the school's essential practices, he was reluctant to specify a particular practice or give examples of rules that could be eliminated. If the school were doing a hundred things, he argued, "we need to do 92 of them in order for the model to work." The analogy used by David Levin, the founder of KIPP, to describe this holistic approach, is called 1/12. Mr. Bradley described it for me:

> So, they use this analogy—I don't know if you're a baseball fan of like Derek Jeter—so, Derek Jeter gets the hit once every three times he gets up to bat. And then [there is] some no-name baseball player who's been batting 250 for his entire career and nobody even knows who he is. And he gets a hit one every four times he goes to bat. And so, if you look at the difference between Derek Jeter, a hall of, you know, sure thing hall of famer, all-star every year, the difference between 1/3 and 1/4 is 1/12. And so, you know, our philosophy is really, there's no one thing that we do that just revolutionizes, you know, education. It's, you know, 100, you know, like little tiny nuanced things that make the difference.

If it takes a hundred little procedures to maintain order, it seems risky to eliminate even a single procedure.

School leaders observed how a little change in procedure altered the school culture. Mr. Bradley notices visible changes in student behavior—for the worse—when the school

implements different events like “crazy sock day” or invites outside groups to lead activities. “We tried to do … this like fun character learning, but I mean, it ended up being a lot more problems than it was really worth because, you know, you try this loosey, goosey approach and the kids get sent mixed messages,” he explained. “You’re trying to sweat the small stuff and then you let the, you know, it’s a free-for-all for the next hour and a half and inevitably there was always problems during it.” He says he can predict how the school day will go by how well homeroom runs. If teachers are on top of things in homeroom, students behave well through the day. When teachers are tired or sick, students’ behaviors deteriorate. In defending the strictness of the school’s rules, Ms. Scott gave me an example from the previous Friday. She was not feeling well and was not fully sweating the small stuff during her cafeteria duty. As a result, she found that students took advantage and got into more trouble. “Even when we’re not consistent, like there is a definite difference in the children’s behavior when we’re not on top of our game,” she explained.

As much as school leaders may want to alter some rules, they find it difficult to do so. Ms. Williams wants to extend the 30-minute lunch period because she feels that it is one of the only times students get to express themselves. But the school attempted this in the past and it did not work. “It was 45 minutes and then the kids would kind of spiral out of control because it was too much time in their hands that they were idle after eating,” she explained. “So, they would get in trouble.” Ms. Williams also believes that older students should be able to earn the privilege of walking by themselves in the hallway. But she has never seen silent hallways in the upper middle school, not even for a week. She has thought about giving some kids hallway privileges but she does not necessarily want to differentiate students more. Furthermore, to give students hallway privileges, she thinks the school would need to prepare kids to make this transition. The teachers

would also need to be on board. In past years, when Mr. Bradley suggested the idea of giving the older students the ability to walk freely in the hallways, the teachers said no. He explained that the school would need superstar teachers in order for a less structured environment to be successful.

I observed this difficulty in changing even minor rules during one of the weekly meetings between Ms. Williams and Mr. Bradley. They first discussed books to send to the new hires: *Teach Like a Champion*, *Reading Without Limits*, and *Writers Workshop*. Mr. Bradley suggested *Smart Parenting*, a book he's been reading as a new father. It's about "making your children resourceful, from a parenting perspective but has a lot of applications to what we do as teachers." He explained how the book discussed different categories of parents: one is positive but overly critical. "I do tend to think we fall into that," he reflected. "We're very structured, don't let kids figure things out on their own. A lot of kids are already coming from environments where they have self-esteem issues."

As a new parent, Mr. Bradley has begun to recognize that the school's disciplinary approach does not give students sufficient autonomy. Yet, when Ms. Williams shared an incident a few minutes later, he pushed back on even making minor changes to the school's strict rules. Ms. Williams related an earlier incident in which a teacher confronted her for telling a student that she could bring a bottle of water to school on a hot day. The teacher questioned why she would have said that to the student when the school did not permit students to have water bottles. "I realize we're on the strict side of things, but we have to have that balance," Ms. Williams argued.

Mr. Bradley disagreed. “For years and years and years, we’ve said no because you’re going to get—” He reached over to a plastic water bottle standing on the desk and scrunched it. “You’re gonna have 250 kids doing—” He scrunched the bottle again.

“I get it but as a teacher in my own class, if a student makes that sound, I will tell him, put it in your backpack,” argued Ms. Williams.

“The tricky part is you can do that, it’s really easy,” Mr. Bradley continued. “Can Ms. H. do it? Everyone can’t handle the kids asking for water. Because your classroom management is so strong. It’s why we ban little pencil sharpeners, not everyone can handle it; it’s easier to make a rule.” He reminded her that little things become big things. But he acknowledged, “Some of the things we do, it crushes kids’ self-esteem. It does.”

In this exchange, Mr. Bradley underscores the need to make consistent rules to support weaker teachers. In his mind, this takes priority over students’ socio-emotional needs because keeping order is foremost. Any tinkering with the system can undermine it, a cost the school is unwilling to incur. Having implemented a series of structures, school leaders find it difficult to adjust them without compromising the integrity of the system.

Discussion

From the first two KIPP schools which were started in 1994, no-excuses schools have spread rapidly, now serving over 100,000 students. How can we understand the success of these schools? How did no-excuses schools become the dominant model for urban charter schools and one of the most promising initiatives in education today? More specifically, why have school leaders embraced a highly regimented and controversial disciplinary approach?

The key insight of this chapter is that school leaders adopted the no-excuses model out of an urgent need to keep order. This is a significant finding because it adds nuance to arguments

that attribute neoliberal ideologies to recent developments in urban school reform (Apple, 2006; Lipman, 2003). Critics argue that corporate foundations and an education entrepreneur network have played a key role in the spread of no-excuses schools and neoliberal reforms in education (Kretchmar et al., 2014). These reforms, which emphasize choice, competition, and accountability, have come to dominate the education discourse. While I do not deny the role of market-based logics and players in the spread of no-excuses schools, my findings complement this work by showing how the no-excuses disciplinary system solves a real problem for urban educators: order.

Most people do not recognize the almost accidental nature of the no-excuses disciplinary model. It was not based on theories of child development or classroom management like other well-known disciplinary frameworks (e.g., Positive Based Interventions and Supports, restorative justice), but neither did it emerge from a business-minded desire to maximize efficiency and raise test scores. In 1993, David Levin and Michael Feinberg, both young, White, Ivy League graduates, were second-year Teach for America teachers in Houston. After a difficult first year, Levin and Feinberg were beginning to improve. They attributed their success to intensively studying and stealing the methods of effective teachers in their schools. Most directly, they entered into a mentorship with Harriett Ball, a charismatic and effective 46-year-old African American teacher at Levin's school. From her, they learned that what worked, in addition to songs and chants, was "an instant and overwhelming response to any violation of the rules" (Mathews, 2009, p. 172). Another model teacher was Rafe Esquith, a celebrated fifth grade teacher at South Central, Los Angeles. Esquith tells this story: Levin was so enamored of Esquith's example that he took his students on the same field trip to Arches National Park in

Arizona that Esquith took his students on. During the trip, Levin called Esquith telling him he was there and asking what to do next (Jones, 2004, p. 27).

In creating KIPP, Levin and Feinberg largely copied the techniques of successful urban teachers. KIPP's paycheck system, for example, was a variation of a system used by Esquith (Jones, 2004). Already, these practices were controversial. In the first year of KIPP South Bronx, one new teacher left because she found Levin's approach to discipline too harsh. Preferring to establish a more informal relationship with her students, she did not see a need to address a student immediately for every rule broken (Mathews, 2009). But Levin and Feinberg, like Mr. Taylor and Ms. Williams, did not embrace a no-excuses model because they were dedicated to a market logic, focused on increasing their students' productivity. They recognized the realities of urban school failure, and needed to establish a minimum level of order to survive. They copied the practices of effective teachers and schools in desperation for something that worked. Without recognizing this reality, critics of no-excuses schools may throw out the baby with the bathwater. The harsh disciplinary methods adopted by no-excuses schools were previously used effectively by teachers in urban schools. Some of the controversy that surrounds their current use may be a result of the systematization of these practices, their use by White, middle-class educators, and the loss of flexibility and ease that teachers like Harriett Ball or Rafe Esquith could employ because of their experience and shared racial backgrounds.

The second insight of this chapter is that school leaders recognized the problems that emerged from the wholesale copying of a rigid model but were reluctant to modify it. Because the model worked, first to keep order and second to raise achievement, school leaders found it difficult to disentangle which practices and structures were beneficial, and which were auxiliary. The no-excuses model, particularly its disciplinary system, was taken as a package deal, each

little rule necessary to maintain an order that school leaders recognized as fragile. Yet, the fact is that these rules and systems were accumulated in an ad hoc way and may not serve the needs of each school, student, and teacher. The system did not rise organically, like the system Ms. Williams developed for her students through trial and error, but was copied and imposed. Although urban schools may need to be far more prescriptive than they are, they may not need to embrace such a totalizing disciplinary approach to establish order.

Can no-excuses schools grow? Can school leaders learn to adapt their disciplinary systems to better fit their needs? As they matured, the Bay Area KIPP schools implemented a restorative justice disciplinary system (Zappa, 2015), a widely endorsed approach to addressing student behavior. Still, many if not most no-excuses schools continue to retain the basic disciplinary features of these schools. Ms. Scott's insight that the school disciplinary system is more for the teachers than the students is relevant here. In many ways, no-excuses schools are organizations that attract and support novices. For these schools to mature, they may need more experienced teachers, but making superstars takes time. In Chapter 5, I focus on teachers and how they adapt to the disciplinary system. But first, I turn in the next chapter to students and their experiences under the school's disciplinary system. Having established why the system was adopted, I now consider the major critique of no-excuses schools—that their disciplinary practices promote conformity and rule-following, failing to provide students with the skills necessary for their long-term success (Ben-Porath, 2013; Goodman, 2013; Lack, 2009).

CHAPTER 4: THE PARADOX OF SUCCESS

One rainy January afternoon, I sat with Alexis, a bright, outspoken eighth grader. She was at school with a few dozen other students who had accumulated too many behavioral infractions to participate in that day's snow tubing trip. A student at Dream Academy since the fifth grade, she reflected on her experiences:

> I didn't like it 'cause I was so young when I came here and it was strict. It still is strict and I didn't like that. They were just so picky. Like they were asking me so much . . . 'cause they want to get us to college but that's not how they be acting in college. In college they are—they're not strict. In college, you can do whatever you want so this is a college preparatory school so we should be able to do whatever we want but we're not. So, technically it's not a college preparatory school because you're not prepping us for college—you're disciplining us, like you don't have detention in college. You don't have to wear a uniform in college. You don't have to walk in straight lines in college.

Alexis echoed her classmates' complaints about the school's constant surveillance of their behaviors, but she also recognized that the school was trying to help her achieve upward mobility. Thus she could say, "our school is so terrible," and then add, "I mean, it's a good school." Yet, following the school's logic, she questioned whether the school's behavioral practices would prepare her for college, identifying a contradiction between the school's prescriptive practices and the flexibility of the college environment. When I asked her how she knows what college is like, she explained, "I got to do my research;" plus, she was forced to talk to her stepsisters who were college students.

In this chapter, I explore how no-excuses schools are preparing their students for college; specifically, I focus on the skills and behaviors that students learn through no-excuses disciplinary practices. I argue that students, in many cases, are taught to monitor themselves, hold back their opinions, and defer to authority rather than take initiative, assert themselves, and interact with ease with their teachers. Updating Bowles and Gintis (1976) for a post-industrial

society, I argue that, instead of producing workers to sustain industrial capitalism, schools produce worker-learners with the intention of closing the achievement gap.

Cultural Skills and Inequality

Families transmit economic, human, and social capital to their children, as well as a "toolkit" of cultural skills and habits (Swidler, 1986). The past two decades have seen a growing recognition of the importance of cultural skills, but less clarity on what skills are important, for whom, and in what contexts. In considering the consequences of how new urban schools are socializing students, we must first specify how cultural skills relate to inequality. Part of the difficulty of this task is piecing together research across a number of disciplines on noncognitive skills, social and behavioral skills, and cultural capital (Bowles & Gintis, 2002; for reviews, see G. Farkas, 2003).

Bowles and Gintis (1976) were among the first to argue for the importance of noncognitive skills in social stratification.[28] Their correspondence principle contends that schools, in reflecting workplace structures, teach working-class children obedience, deference, and punctuality to socialize them into working-class jobs, yet teach middle-class students creativity, independence, and assertiveness to prepare them for the requirements of managerial positions. Studies have found that teachers' pedagogical and social control strategies vary by their students' social class backgrounds; teachers emphasize rule-compliance and rote behavior with low-income minority students, but they emphasize expression, independence, and

[28]Taking a Marxist perspective, Bowles and Gintis (1976) trace the development of mass public education in America in the mid-nineteenth century to the growth of the capitalist class and its need for a disciplined and obedient workforce. In the 1800s, the United States experienced rapid industrial growth and mass immigration from Europe. As a result of these changing economic tides, the mill owners and professional class advocated for public education as a way to inculcate moral values into the working class and to quell social unrest. Education, as Horace Mann said, would become "the balance wheel of the social machinery."

negotiation with students from more privileged classes (Anyon, 1980; Keddie, 1971; Wilcox, 1982). For the sake of clarity, I label these working-class skills that emphasize conformity as *behavioral norms*, and categorize these middle-class skills of self-assertion as *interactional skills*. Critical scholars argue that this differential teaching of behavioral norms and interactional skills—also known as the hidden curriculum—is one of the primary ways schools contribute to social class reproduction.

Recent research on cultural capital, redefined as a broad set of skills that helps certain social classes meet institutions' evaluative standards (Lareau & Weininger, 2003), finds support for these assertions. Lareau (2003) observes that middle-class parents teach their children to be assertive, take initiative, and negotiate with authority, whereas working-class parents teach their children to hold back their opinions and defer to authority (see also Calarco, 2014a; Kohn, 1989). As a result, middle-class children are better able than working-class children to customize interactions to their benefit, for example, by gaining additional assistance from teachers (Calarco, 2011, 2014b; Streib, 2011) or by getting a doctor to attend to their concerns (Lareau, 2003). "In a historical moment when the dominant society privileges active, informed, assertive clients of health and educational services," Lareau (2002, p. 794) argues, "the strategies employed by children and parents are not equally effective across classes." For Lareau, these interactional skills are symbolic; they are evaluated favorably in a particular time and place.

Research on noncognitive skills, in contrast, conceptualizes these skills as human capital (Farkas, 1996). Moreover, this work focuses primarily on the value of behavioral norms rather than interactional skills; studies have found that attention, organization, effort, punctuality, and self-control, for example, are positively associated with students' grades, test scores, and earnings (Duckworth & Seligman, 2005; Farkas, 1996; Heckman & Rubinstein, 2001; Jennings

& DiPrete, 2010; Rosenbaum, 2001). Besides influencing teacher evaluations, behavioral norms can also increase learning (Farkas, 1996; Jennings & DiPrete, 2010). Whereas Bowles and Gintis (1976) argue that behavioral norms socialize working-class children into productive workers, this research suggests that behavioral norms may also help students become more productive learners. In addition to producing docile workers, schools may also produce successful students, complicating the process of social reproduction.

Yet, in a post-industrial, global economy, interactional skills are increasingly important. The rise of globalization and mechanization has bifurcated the workplace into high-skill/high-wage and low-skill/low-wage jobs (Brynjolfsson & McAfee, 2011). Since the 1970s, jobs requiring basic cognitive and manual skills have declined, while those requiring communication and critical thinking skills have increased (Autor, Levy, & Murnane, 2003). Behavioral norms might help students get through high school, but the types of skills needed for success in higher levels of learning and work become evident when students enter college. One of the most significant problems in higher education is the low rate of college completion among low-income, minority, and first-generation college students (Provasnik & Planty, 2008). In addition to facing academic and financial obstacles, working-class students also confront difficulties in adapting to the college-student role (Collier & Morgan, 2008; Karp & Bork, 2012). Even community colleges are much less structured than high schools, expecting students to independently manage their work, approach their professors during office hours, and assert their needs (Karp and Bork, 2012).

Finally, interactional skills are critical to active citizenship. The ability to express one's opinions, advocate a position, and collaborate with others is foundational to participation in a democratic society (Ben-Porath, 2013). Schools have long been viewed as critical to sustaining

democratic society by producing thinking citizens. Although sociologists of education concentrate on individual mobility, Bowles and Gintis (1976) view school socialization efforts as consequential for the reproduction of class-consciousness and the social relations of production. To incite social change, critical scholars argue that students must develop the skills to recognize and resist existing power structures (Giroux, 1983; Willis, 1977). The skills to foster academic achievement thus may be distinct from those required to enact social change.

Dream Academy's goal was to prepare its students with the skills and knowledge for success in college. In the next section, I discuss how administrators and teachers conceptualized and talked about the skills they sought to teach students. In the subsequent section, I examine the skills that Dream Academy actually transmitted through its disciplinary system. Although students resist school practices, drawing on their own cultural and social resources to shape their identities (Willis, 1977), schools play an influential and important role in forming particular types of students and selves (Bowles and Gintis, 1976). Finally, I consider why school leaders and teachers believed they were preparing students with the middle-class skills they needed to succeed in college and the workplace when they, in fact, reinforced working-class skills.

Preparing Students for College

From the first days of orientation, students understood that their eyes were to be focused on the prize of college. "OK what grade are you in?" Ms. Anderson asked the rows of students seated in white polo shirts on the cafeteria floor. "Some of you said fifth grade, and that's OK but that's not why we're here. We are not here to make you the fifth graders to get to sixth grade. The reason why we are here is to ensure that each and everyone of you gets to college and graduates from college." She encouraged them to start thinking about themselves in the year they would graduate from college: 2024. On the overhead, she showed them logos for a number of

colleges. She then showed them a graph of graduation rates in the local public schools. “For every 50 students that enter in ninth grade, there are six left who are college ready,” she explained. “For that reason we do a lot of things differently. I can ensure you that no other student in the city is in school today. I can ensure you that you are going to go home and tell mom and dad, the school is so strict. You will complain about the amount of homework you are going to have.”

In this example, Ms. Anderson sets the new students up to view the school’s strictures in terms of college preparation. School leaders believed that “explaining the why” helped students understand the purpose behind the school’s seemingly arbitrary rules. “But I think that the way you can eliminate a lot of [student frustration] is through rationale, and repeated rationale, and explaining why it is that we’re doing what it is that we’re doing repeatedly, and in a way that’s meaningful for children,” explained Ms. Anderson. School leaders and teachers frequently related the school’s disciplinary practices to the middle-class skills students needed for college and the real world. They explained that giving students detention for arriving one minute late to school helped them develop time management, a skill they would need in college. They asserted that college applications would not be accepted if they were one minute late; similarly, professors locked doors once classes had begun. They told students that silent hallways taught students self-control, a trait that would get them to and through college. One afternoon, I watched Ms. Rivas asking a misbehaving student why it was important to show self-control. “It affects my classwork grade,” the girl replied. Ms. Rivas prompted for a bigger reason. “Don’t go on to the next grade.” She pushed her again, “And why is it important to go on to the next grade?” Knowingly, she offered, “You’re closer to college.”

One of the most common explanations for the school’s disciplinary practices was that

they instilled in students the middle-class skills and behaviors they would need to succeed in college, and life more generally. During a new teacher orientation session, school administrators and teachers studied a two-page chart in the book, *Framework for Understanding Poverty*, with columns labeled Poverty, Middle Class, and Wealth and rows with categories such as possessions, money, food, clothing, and time. The chart provided generalizing descriptions for the different social classes: for example, it argued that survival, relationships, and entertainment are the driving forces for poverty; work and achievement are the driving forces for the middle class; and financial, political and social connections are the driving force for wealth. Mr. Bradley, who read the book that summer, explained how the book helped him understand a lot of things they did at the school. "School is the only place where students from poor families can learn the hidden rules of the middle class," he told the teachers. Most agreed with this perspective. Only Ms. Larkin, a new White teacher, pushed back: "Our country is based off a middle-class educational system," she agreed. "At the same time, what about the middle class makes it the penultimate? Don't we want to embrace where students come from?" Reversing the culture of poverty argument, she asked, "Don't we have a poverty of culture?"

Ms. Rivas stepped in. "I am going to agree with this framework, I grew up in poverty, the parents are not there." She explained that it wasn't because parents did not want to be there, but it is the school's job to show students that they have more choices for their future. She goes out of her way everyday to show students how she also conforms to middle-class norms. Although she likes to be comfortable and wear sweatpants, she shows students how she has to look professional for work.

"Students need to be taught the hidden rules of the middle class—the language of power, the culture of power," Ms. Williams agreed.

This discussion of teaching middle-class norms is part of a larger scholarship on the "hidden curriculum." This research sees schools as operating under White, middle-class cultural norms that make it more difficult for minority and poor students to succeed (Bourdieu, 1974; Giroux, 1983; Mehan, 1980). Explicitly teaching these norms is seen as a way to give disadvantaged students access to these codes of power. As Lisa Delpit argues, "If you are not already a participant in the culture of power, being told explicitly the rules of that culture makes acquiring power easier" (p. 282). The hidden curriculum and culturally relevant teaching are commonly studied in education programs, particularly in relation to teaching poor and minority students. Most school leaders had some familiarity with these theories as they used phrases like code switching and the culture of power. For Mr. Bradley, teaching middle-class norms was a new idea that resonated with what he felt the school was doing through its behavioral practices.

During my fieldwork, I occasionally shared my own perceptions of school practices with teachers or mentioned concerns that students had voiced to me. When I relayed these criticisms, school leaders and teachers often referred to this justification of teaching middle-class or college skills to defend their practices. For example, when I mentioned to Ms. Costello, a White teacher and instructional leader, that some students felt that teachers were too picky, she responded that it was okay to be particular about things that were important. "Everything that we do and everything that we pick on, there's a standard for it in the outside world," she replied. "So yeah, maybe like telling a student they have to have their shirt tucked in might seem nitpicky to somebody, but to me, once you go to the real world, you have to dress a certain way and look a certain way and be neat and be presentable and so you're really just teaching a bigger life lesson." Similarly, some students told me that they accepted school disciplinary practices because they prepared them for college. By reinforcing this broader purpose of the school's

disciplinary practices, school administrators were able to increase teachers' and students' commitment to the model.

But to what extent did Dream Academy's disciplinary practices prepare students with the social and behavioral skills they would need for college? I argue that the skills and behaviors encouraged by Dream Academy were far removed from those taught in middle-class homes and schools. In teaching students to monitor themselves, hold back their opinions, and defer to authority, I argue that Dream Academy reinforced rather than taught the hidden curriculum, producing worker-learners instead of lifelong learners.

Producing Worker-Learners

Not Trusted to Make Decisions

"If you don't put your name on your homework, you get a detention," one eighth-grader complained. "If you are one minute late, you get a detention. If you breathe really hard, you get a detention. When we get too loud, they get mad." The myriad school rules that school leaders believe are necessary to ensure student achievement left students with little room to make their own decisions, or their own mistakes. On any given afternoon, the cafeteria was filled with students in detention who have violated one of the school's meticulous rules: refusing to lift a head off a desk, talking in the hallway, leaving a homework problem blank, chewing gum, getting out of their seat without permission, and the catch-all, disrespecting a teacher.

"I think they're just like, they don't have trust in us," said eighth grader Aniya. "They just seem like they don't have trust in us. Like, we don't have no freedom and it's not cool because we are a good school, like you don't see like graffiti on the walls. You don't see fights every day."

In particular, seventh and eighth graders complained that school rules make them feel

treated like elementary school children. The hallway rules, which stipulated that students must walk with their classes in straight, silent, and forward-facing lines, were among the most detested. Given the division of the upper- and lower-middle school to different floors, students did not have far to walk between classes, sometimes only directly across the hall. Yet teachers still lined up each class and insisted on silence during transitions. To students, these rules signaled that the school did not trust them to make the most basic choices, even as they entrusted the school with their education. "Our school's real small, so it's like, I want to know where they think we're gonna go—like we're gonna hop down the hallway?" one eighth-grade girl questioned. "Like the classes are really right there." Another eighth-grade girl thought that students needed to learn independence as they got older: "I think we would be mature enough to be able to talk to our friends in the hallways. "Like we need to get maturity, too, as we grow older."

Inside the classroom, teachers also set precise expectations for student behavior instead of trusting them to monitor themselves. In a typical exchange, Ms. Anderson narrated student behaviors one morning to her fifth-grade class:

> "I need everyone to sit correctly in their seats," Ms. Anderson began as she entered the classroom. "Luis. Luis." He sat with his legs turned to the side. "David, I need you to focus and work." Turning to her co-teacher, Ms. Anderson thought aloud, "I'm getting a little nervous that during team time today, we're going to have to have a silent team time." A few minutes later, she changed her strategy from a threat to positive reinforcement. "Let's forget about who's talking and focus on our math drill like so many of our teammates are doing," she encouraged. "A lot of people are doing the right thing." Giving out a verbal warning, and then a detention, Ms. Anderson announced, "Brandon, that's a one, I'm sorry, a two." Gesturing to a girl slouched over, she continued, "Shaniya, sit up. Shaniya, sit up." Catching two students talking, she gave out two more warnings. "Micah, that's a one, stop. Grace, that's a one, stop."

Like Ms. Anderson, teachers were expected to constantly scan their classrooms to ensure students were directing their full attention to the instruction. These frequent reminders helped

some students stay focused, but for others, not having a sense of autonomy increased feelings of stress and anxiety (Ryan & Connell, 1989; see Ryan & Deci, 2000), which can have negative consequences for students' academic performance, motivation, and engagement (Goodenow, 1993; C. E. Ross & Broh, 2000).

During one lunch period, I sat with three eighth-grade girls who often found themselves in detention. The girls had little positive to say about the school, complaining that it only cared about its reputation and wanted students to look good so the school looked good. I tried to push them, arguing that their teachers worked hard to get students to learn. One girl conceded that she did learn a lot here, more than she might learn somewhere else. "But it's not worth the stress," she insisted. Pointing to her hair, she explained that it started falling out only after she came to this school. Her friends agreed. The school had recommended they see a therapist; one girl had already been tested and referred to the Big Brother, Big Sister program. Constantly being punished for their behaviors, these girls developed a negative attitude toward the school and their teachers, their feelings of stress overshadowing their positive learning experiences.

Experiences of stress and anxiety were not limited to students who were frequently punished. Some of the best-behaved students also felt pressure to watch themselves, because they tried so diligently to be good students. As Goffman (1961) describes life inside total institutions, "Given echelon authority and regulations that are diffuse, novel, and strictly enforced, we may expect inmates, especially new ones, to live with chronic anxiety about breaking the rules and the consequence of breaking them" (p. 42). Sydney, a quiet and studious eighth grader, expressed these feelings of anxiety. She told me she was reluctant even three years later to reflect back on her first year at the school. "It was like I was freaking out the first year," she explained. "I just could not take the pressure in the beginning. I was so scared." She

recounted how she would receive homework detentions after spending so much effort completing her assignments, because she had forgotten to put her name on the header or accidentally skipped a problem. The school's homework rules of "neat, complete, on-time, and best effort," while meant to teach students skills like diligence, organization, and timeliness, led students like Sydney to feel overwhelmed by the pressures to perform. According to Ms. Scott, kids who put pressure on themselves to be perfect do not always do well at the school. "[When] a teacher says, 'Tuck your shirt in,'" she explained, "it like devastates them or crushes them."

By not trusting students to make their own choices, I argue that Dream Academy reinforces in working-class kids a "sense of constraint" rather than a "sense of entitlement" (Lareau, 2003). Instead of learning to watch themselves, middle-class children learn that they are to be trusted, listened to, and taken seriously by those in positions of authority (Khan, 2011; Lareau, 2003). Researchers argue that this sense of entitlement helps middle-class students interact with authorities and navigate institutions, furthering their advantages over their working-class counterparts (Calarco, 2011; Khan, 2011; Lareau, 2003).

Opinions Not Needed

Raised in the same city as her students, Ms. Williams described her own high school experience as "oppressive" and her teachers' expectations lowered for her because she was Black. After working for Teach for America in an urban school, she moved to Dream Academy to make an impact in her own community. Mr. Bradley viewed his primary goal as raising students' test scores, but Ms. Williams did not put achievement first when she articulated her goals. She wanted to develop students' voices so they could effect social change. "I think that it's important because the kids have to understand that their voice has power, right?" she reflected. "And ultimately when they understand that their voice has power and the ability to communicate

and they can get things done, they will start to have bigger impacts and make bigger changes within—not just this school, but within the community." She made an explicit effort during morning assembly to teach students ways to more effectively communicate with teachers, for example, by using "I feel" statements. Although some students used these new tools to communicate, they learned different lessons from the school's disciplinary structures.

During the school day, students received few opportunities to speak. To maximize instructional time and keep students focused on their learning, the school stipulates silence during multiple points of the day, including homeroom, transitions between classes, the introductory Do Now exercise, and independent practice. Teaching is largely didactic, with student input solicited primarily in the form of short answers to questions. More advanced teachers integrate interactive activities into their lessons, but new teachers—particularly those struggling with student behavior—were encouraged to establish order before experimenting with more innovative teaching strategies. School leaders instructed teachers to have students work silently and independently when their behavioral expectations were not being met because group work is more difficult to monitor. Order was seen as a prerequisite to effective teaching, rather than a consequence of effective teaching. During their weekly professional development meeting, Ms. Anderson offered advice to a new teacher who was having difficulty getting her students to follow her directions. "You're pushing to do higher level, advanced teacher things," she told her. "You have to crawl before you can walk."

Especially in the beginning of the year, when teachers are working to establish their authority, students can spend class after class mostly in silence. This led one eighth-grade girl to complain, "We're silent all the time. Silent even in clubs, silent in class, silent. Come out of the building, silent." Even when able to talk, Amir, a diligent fifth grader, learned he should talk

only at specific times:

> Self-control is when you're able to talk, when you know to talk at the appropriate time. And it's important because you can get a really bad consequence and I do, I really show self-control because I don't talk at all in class and I talk when the teacher tells me when I have to talk or answer a question. And otherwise I don't talk in class.

In most schools, teachers instruct students to raise their hands, but they communicate that rules are more flexible through their actions (Calarco, 2011; Mehan, 1980). In contrast, students at Dream Academy were taught always to respond to rules in the same way. One homeroom teacher even came up with a contest in which students would be awarded a pizza party if they did not call out in class for an entire day. Students were given a clipboard to keep track of how many times they called out—the first day, they had 47 callouts by lunch. Researchers, however, argue that part of classroom competence is the ability to interpret different contexts and activate skills and behaviors at appropriate times (Mehan, 1980). Instead of always raising their hands, middle-class students learn when to raise their hands, when to call out, and when to approach their teachers for help based on their interpretation of the situation (Calarco, 2011; Streib, 2011).

Angie, a former student at Dream Academy, provided students with a glimpse of the interactional skills students would need for college when she came back to speak about her experience as a first-year student at one of the nation's elite boarding schools. During the school's morning assembly, she encouraged students to be open-minded because "they teach a bit differently at her school." She explained that the students at her school "teach each other" by sitting around a table and having discussions. "You learn different skills and you learn them differently, and they may think differently than you," she told the students. Although it took her some time to adjust, she liked having the opportunity to use her voice. "I love the method, I

grabbed on to it. It makes you realize that your opinion matters." In contrast, at Dream Academy, she had not learned that her opinions matter.

Deferring to Authority

At school, students not only develop expectations for how they should behave, but also for how they should relate to authority. At elite boarding schools, students learn to be at ease with adults, which helps prepare them for leadership positions in which they will need to interact with different types of people (Khan, 2011). At Dream Academy, students learn different lessons. Given few opportunities to negotiate or participate in rule-making, students often find themselves at odds—rather than at ease—with their teachers. Although teachers at times tried to treat students more equally, they reverted to being authoritarian when students did not follow school expectations.

At the start of the school year, Ms. Evans, a first-year Black teacher, kept herself at a distance from her students. She did not engage students in casual conversation or joke around with them nor did she smile. She strictly enforced school rules, particularly around the silent transition into the classroom. After a few weeks of school, I observed her making an effort to engage students in a dialogue over their behavior. She tried to reason with them—she had put their writing drills on their desks, picked them up from their last classroom, and set up expectations for silence as they walked into the room. She opened the floor to a discussion about what might motivate them to transition into the classroom silently. One student suggested an ice cream party; another said that it was on the students—Ms. Evans was not doing anything wrong. Midway through the conversation, Ms. Evans stopped.

"This is not a playroom," she scolded a few students engaged in their own conversation. "You won't want to be joining anyone in a fifth-grade classroom." She delivered a warning to a

student who was out of his seat and talking. When he tried to explain that he had just come in, she sent him out of the classroom. The girl seated in front of him spoke up to defend him, but Ms. Evans refused to listen. Her attention was now turned on Aniya, a girl who had been giving her trouble since the start of school. "Bye, I'll see you tomorrow," Ms. Evans turned to her, sending her out of the classroom again. "I'm in charge here. This is not your show, it's the Ms. Evans show when you come in here. End of conversation." As this incident demonstrates, however, even teachers who tried to relate to students often found it necessary to revert to a more hierarchical relationship to maintain control. Yet by trying not to compromise their own authority, teachers often did not provide room for students to speak up and defend themselves.

When rules are ubiquitous, students become keenly aware of the rules and the processes by which they are enforced. Immediately after teachers issued a consequence, it was not unusual to hear a student protest: "What did I do?" or "It wasn't me!" At times, these reactions were aimed to provoke, but in many situations, students felt unfairly accused. Teachers made mistakes because they so frequently disciplined students. They called out the wrong student; failed to differentiate between talking, turning, or helping out a classmate; and seldom saw the whole story. Yet, in nearly all the classroom interactions I observed, teachers instructed students to defer to their authority even when students disagreed with the teacher's judgment. Shariece, an eighth grader, described how students received more severe punishments for protesting:

> Say, for instance, you get in trouble and you got the freedom of speech to explain it, what you did, what you didn't do. When it came to Ms. Ellis, she didn't care, like, she'll go based on what she thinks she saw or heard and you wasn't able to explain what you actually did or said. And when you did try to explain it, she had this three-strike system: it was warning, points, and then detention, then call home. And if you tried to explain to her what you did, then she'll just put you on next strike, saying, "I know what I saw" or "I know what I heard." She assumed a lot of things.

In invoking the First Amendment, Shariece argued that her teachers' refusal to listen to her defense denied her the basic freedoms of speech. A few teachers went as far as showing students that they did not have these freedoms in the real world. One teacher showed students YouTube clips of court proceedings where individuals received more severe punishments for talking back. In one clip, the judge added extra days to a woman's 30-day sentence for arguing. While a culturally relevant lesson might have showed students different ways to get your voice heard, this lesson appeared more targeted at getting students to stop talking back.

The school leadership recognized the seriousness of this problem and tried to ameliorate it by instituting the "w sign," standing for "when can we talk." Students could raise three fingers in a "w sign" when they wanted to talk to a teacher about a disciplinary matter; the teacher was supposed to write a pass for the student to come back later in the day for a conversation. During my time at the school, however, the w sign did not provide an effective solution: teachers ignored the sign, did not have free time to meet with students, or accused students of misusing the w sign. Moreover, teachers who were willing to talk to students did not always listen. One eighth-grade male explained how he would follow up with teachers but they would not believe his side of the story. "When they jump to conclusions, they—like, they're stuck in their ways basically," he argued. By trying to find a quick fix to this problem, the school failed to address the underlying power differentials between students and teachers, or give students a larger say in setting and enforcing rules.

By demanding that students submit to their authority, teachers tried to enforce school-wide behavioral norms, but in doing so, they failed to develop in students other important interactional skills, including the ability to question authority and express opinions. Moreover,

by increasing the distance between teachers and students, the school inadvertently made it more difficult for teachers to establish relationships with students, as I discuss in chapter 6.

Getting Through

"Everyone is going to face obstacles," Mr. Bradley told the students gathered in morning circle. "Not doing well in math, obstacles at home. Every excuse that we make keeps us from the things we want in life." He started a video on the overhead projector. The lights were still on, making the video hard to see, but I did not hear any students complaining. The video showed Kyle Maynard, a paraplegic with no legs and arms, climbing Mt. Kilimanjaro. It was one of these 60 Minutes type specials, showing his baby pictures, interviewing his sister, and explaining how he had lost dozens of wrestling matches in high school before winning one. At one point, Kyle spoke to the camera: "My message is a pretty simple one: it is to make no excuses." After the video concluded, Mr. Bradley picked up on this message. "So, this morning we watched an individual who had every motivation to make excuses. If he didn't make excuses, you shouldn't either," he told the students. "Our Mt. Kilimanjaro is getting that college degree. Let's think about this, let's show grit."

Grit, a term popularized by psychologist Angela Duckworth, is defined as the ability to persist through obstacles (Duckworth, Peterson, Matthews, & Kelly, 2007). Students found school itself to be one of their most biggest obstacles, and viewed graduating from middle school as a great accomplishment. "Some teachers just don't understand like we live in a struggle right now," said eighth grader Alexis. She clarified: "This is the struggle." "It's like they don't understand like how hard it is for students nowadays," echoed eighth grader Alisha. "They didn't go to no school like this. So they need to understand sometimes that what we go through is hard and they should at least cut us some slack."

With its singular focus on academics and its rigid disciplinary structures, Dream Academy was a challenging place for students. I often felt the tedium of school, observing class after class of teachers lecturing on behavior and students completing worksheets. "I would describe the school as a well-educated school and um, it's not a fun school," said eighth grader Amber. "I feel like the school doesn't give us any student time, like, it's all about work which is the main reason we're here but we at least should have some like study hall or something where we could interact with each other." Eighth grader Sydney felt that the school expected them already to act like adults:

> It's not that much of a fun time for the students in the class where they can actually be themselves, not straight forward, being straight with their faces like we don't really get that type of time to actually like talk or like to be a kid. It's like we're always gotta be like, I'm a grownup now. Like it's mostly like being a grownup here, it's not like much kid stuff possible. Some teachers are fun and all but it's like not the whole school … it's always strict. We never get a time to just relax and chill.

She ended up going to a different high school because she wanted to have positive school memories. Like the people she knew who looked fondly back on their high school experiences, she did not just want to get through—she wanted to cherish the experience.

At Dream Academy, the focus was on getting through. Ultimately, even the most resistant students learned to play by the rules because they were tired of repeating grades and eager to get out. This theme of getting through school was made evident during the eighth grade graduation speech competition. One afternoon in May, the two eighth-grade classes gathered together to listen to their classmates' speeches and vote on their favorites. Jordan spoke about how he had attended private school for a year but his mother was working all day and the tuition was hard to pay, so he came back to this school. He stated how he strongly disagreed with the school's terms, but learned to "play by the rules." The theme of struggle and overcoming

continued. One student described how "sixth grade was a living hell for me" and "seventh grade was going to knock me down hard." Another recounted how he kept screaming, "I'm free, high school here I come!" The next student learned that hard work and persistence will pay off tremendously. One talked about how he was "counting years, months, days, minutes, seconds until … freedom." "At the end of the day," Aniya told the students, "Your teachers already have their education, it's up to you." She told students to take responsibility for their actions and show self-control. "I would point my own hands instead of raising my hand. Talking back for no reason just to defend myself. Having a little attitude makes life difficult … Through five years, I always said I hate this school but I love this school with all my heart." She ended by borrowing a line of the school's chant, asking students: "Where are you going? College."

Destination: College

"Sweat, blood, and tears." This phrase echoed through Dream Academy's first high school graduation, first voiced by the class valedictorian and subsequently picked up by several other speakers. The class salutatorian spoke about how she had learned resilience at school, "how to make your struggles work." The school principal told the audience that students and teachers had spent 1,200 days working toward this moment. Getting to this point—a 100 percent college acceptance rate—was certainly an accomplishment. But how well did Dream Academy prepare students for their destination?

Dream Academy's emphasis on strictness and self-control shaped students' understanding of what it took to get to, and be successful in, college. Ava, a diligent fifth grader, did not think the school was too strict because "they're just trying to make it comfortable for what college is gonna be like." When I asked her what she thought college was like, she replied, "I think college is gonna be strict and really hard." During music class, I asked Kiara, an eighth

grader, if she liked the school. “No,” she replied immediately, and proceeded to list off the rules that they were required to follow. “Why do you think the school is so strict?” I inquired. “They always say they want us to go to college but we’re only in middle school,” Kiara replied. “Self-discipline, self-control will help us get to college.” Surprised at her response, I asked, “Why does the school think those things will get you to college?” Harold, who was sitting to her left, chimed in, “They probably did it.” He imagined that the teachers had gone to similar schools as this, and looked uncertain when I expressed my doubts. As these student responses show, students made sense of the school’s unfamiliar disciplinary practices through the lens of another unfamiliar setting. The school’s laser focus on college coupled with students’ lack of familiarity with college led them to take teachers literally at their word when teachers said that the school’s strictness was preparing students for college.

Like Alexis, older students began to recognize that not all school rules directly translated to the college environment. After visiting a college, Zayna, an eighth grader, had some of her misperceptions about college amended:

> I mean, don’t get me wrong in college, yes, you have to be quiet but you don’t have to be quiet when you’re going into the dorms. Because I’ve seen colleges where you can talk a little bit in the, um, in the hallways because sometimes there’s couches for you to sit on, so what, they think you’re just going to sit down and read a book? So you can talk a little bit. I mean, I understand if we’re loud but if it’s like a normal tone and normal volume, I think it should be acceptable.

This led her to question whether some of the rules at school might be “a little extra.”

Ms. Indrigo, the high school’s White college counselor, worried that students would not be able to handle the sudden freedoms presented to them in college because they had not been given the opportunity to make their own choices in high school. “You know, I think partially it’s their fault because they haven’t learned to manage their freedoms but it’s partially our fault because we don’t give them any, so when we give them some, they go crazy,” she reflected.

"And so my biggest fear is that these kids are going to go to college and go crazy and like party all the time and not go to class." The high school tried to give students an opportunity to experience the freedom of college by initiating dual-enrollment classes at the local community college, where juniors and seniors could take a class for both high school and college credit. While some students were doing well in the college courses, others were failing. Not faced with an immediate consequence for their actions, some students did not show up to class or do their homework.

During one dual-enrollment math class I observed, the professor asked students if they had any questions on the homework. Only one student asked her to do a question on the board. "Did we discuss our friend BOB?" the professor asked the class. "Back Of Book. You are now in college, we expect you to check answers in the back of the book yourself before class. Do a few problems and check." Unlike their high school teachers, she explained, she did not collect and check homework; college professors assigned odd-numbered questions because those answers were in the back of the book. "We discussed how college students can have enough freedom to take responsibility for their own learning, right?" she reminded the students. "Yes," they echoed back. "If it's a game—not doing homework because I'm not collecting—it may not be the best game to play," she warned.

As students learned to monitor themselves, hold back their opinions, and defer to authority, I argue that they were not encouraged to develop the proactive skills needed to navigate the more flexible expectations of college and the workplace (Collier & Morgan, 2008; Jack, 2016; Karp & Bork, 2012). Middle-class students learn how to interpret situations and act accordingly (Calarco, 2011, 2014b; Mehan, 1980); Dream Academy students learned to always respond to rules in the same way. Middle-class students learn to interact with different types of

people in different situations (Khan, 2011); Dream Academy students learned to always show deference to those in authority. Middle-class students learn to take initiative and make their own choices; Dream Academy students learned to keep quiet and get through. Based on these findings, I argue that no-excuses schools may promote academic achievement while potentially reinforcing inequality in cultural skills. What works to establish order therefore may not coincide with what works for students' success in later life stages.

Bowles and Gintis (1976), in their influential study, argue that schools differentially socialize students for the workforce, teaching working-class students conformity, discipline, and punctuality, but teaching middle-class students creativity, independence, and assertiveness. Nearly 40 years later, my findings echo theirs to a remarkable degree, but also reveal important differences. Bowles and Gintis argue that teachers prepare working-class students for working-class jobs because of their low expectations for their students' futures. I found, however, that teachers' high expectations for their students' futures motivated them to emphasize behavioral control. In emphasizing working-class behavioral norms, Dream Academy aimed to create an orderly environment to raise student test scores and promote social mobility. The teaching of working-class skills, therefore, is not seen as a pathway to the factory, but as a gateway to college and the middle class. Yet, paradoxically, researchers have found that middle-class students successfully navigate middle-class institutions precisely because they do not conform to working-class behavioral norms; rather, middle-class students take initiative, assert their needs, and negotiate with authority (Calarco, 2011; Lareau, 2003).

While it is still too early to assess the impact of no-excuses charter schools on significant longer-term outcomes, like college completion and labor market earnings, preliminary results have raised concerns among no-excuses school leaders. The KIPP schools, for example, found

that only a third of students from their first cohorts completed college within six years, a rate four times higher than the college completion rates of low-income students but well below the 75 percent goal KIPP set for itself, a rate on par with high-income students (KIPP Foundation, 2011). Attributing low college completion rates to students' non-academic skills rather than their academic preparation, KIPP has placed greater emphasis on developing non-cognitive skills.

In differentiating between behavioral norms and interactional skills, I also add clarity to research on non-cognitive skills. Recent research on non-cognitive skills focuses primarily on the benefits of behavioral norms and neglects the importance of interactional skills in higher levels of schooling and work. Yet, on the other side, Lareau (2003) and others privilege interactional skills, overlooking how a "sense of constraint" may be reasonable and even beneficial in certain contexts. Future research should more carefully consider how behavioral norms and interactional skills are advantageous, for whom, and in what contexts. As an example, research on noncognitive skills should distinguish between the effects of leadership, creativity, and eagerness to learn from those of obedience, effort, and punctuality. Likewise, research on parenting might consider other childrearing logics in addition to concerted cultivation and natural growth (Lareau, 2003). Studies of upwardly mobile immigrant children, for example, describe parents who exert high levels of control to keep their children on track, yet also foster strong ties to their families' cultural roots (Portes & Fernández-Kelly, 2008). These parents may provide their children with a sense of constraint and a sense of identity.

Discussion

In the popular conception, the success of no-excuses schools often has been attributed to their teaching of middle-class norms. In a *New York Times* editorial, David Brooks argues that many kids from poor and disorganized homes have not learned how to control their impulses or

work hard. The no-excuses model works because "the schools create a disciplined, orderly and demanding counterculture to inculcate middle-class values." Similarly, David Whitman positively describes no-excuses schools as an example of the new paternalism: a "highly prescriptive institution that teaches students not just how to think but how to act according to what are commonly termed traditional, middle-class values. The Thernstroms, in their book highlighting successful schools for the urban poor, emphasize how these new schools change culture and character (Thernstrom & Thernstrom, 2003). They quote the founder of the KIPP schools, David Levin: "We are fighting a battle involving skills and values. We are not afraid to set social norms." Even for myself, I was initially interested in these schools because I thought they were explicitly teaching middle-class norms to low-income students.

I argue that school leaders purported to teach middle-class norms as they reinforced working-class norms. The idea of teaching middle-class behavioral norms became a justification for the school's behavioral practices, even those that looked very different from what one would see in a middle-class school. In fact, many of the skills and behaviors taught by no-excuses schools are not middle-class or ever achieved by middle-class students. I argue that the school used the explanation of teaching middle-class skills as a *post-hoc justification* because it came after the school's decision to adopt a strict disciplinary model.[29] In other words, the school did

[29]Most of the time, people are not asked to account for their behavior (DiMaggio, 1997). In situations where behaviors are out of the ordinary, however, people may be asked to provide reasons for their actions. When I talk about post-hoc justifications, I do not mean to imply that school leaders strategically adapted these discourses to serve their own purposes. I think there is little intentionality about it. These justifications come from the broader culture. Rather than thinking of culture as values that motivate us to do something, the more recent sociological view is of culture as rationalizations for things we do. Culture has been described as a sense-making toolkit (Swidler, 1986; Vaisey, 2009).

not implement their disciplinary practices because they wanted to teach middle-class skills.[30] Rather, theories of the hidden curriculum helped teachers and administrators make sense of their practices in retrospect. According to Scott and Lyman (1968), "to justify an act is to assert its positive value in the face of a claim to the contrary."

I want to take a moment to consider how research intended to *unveil* the hidden curriculum became a *disguise* for it. How did school leaders misinterpret this research? I suggest two reasons: first, the complexity of the research and second, its lack of clear applications. From my review of literature, I found that the hidden curriculum is an ambiguous concept that has been interpreted in at least two different ways. The first, the one the school used, is that schools operate under White, middle-class norms and fail to make clear these expectations to poor and minority students (Bourdieu, 1974; Giroux, 1983; Mehan, 1980). Scholars like Delpit (1988) argue that by directly teaching dominant behavioral norms, schools can give students from disadvantaged backgrounds access to codes of power.

A different understanding of the hidden curriculum refers to how teachers socialize students differently based on their assumptions about students' future work roles (Apple, 2004; Bowles & Gintis, 1976). Bowles and Gintis (1976) argue that schools prepare working-class kids for working-class jobs by socializing them into norms of obedience, docility, and punctuality, while preparing middle-class kids for managerial positions by teaching them leadership and creativity. In a study of fifth graders in five different schools, for example, Anyon (1980) found that teachers emphasized rule-compliance and rote behavior with working-class students, more

[30]During the school year, I never observed school leaders discussing these ideas with the same depth as they had in new teacher orientation, nor did they organize any professional development around promoting culturally relevant practices. Instead of focusing on the best ways to teach middle-class norms, they instead argued that their behavioral practices were efforts to transmit these norms.

choice but limited creativity with middle-class students, and expression, interpretation, and negotiation with students from the affluent and professional classes (see also Keddie, 1971; Wilcox, 1982). More recent studies have found that middle-class kids gain advantages over working-class kids in classrooms and schools because they are less deferent and more demanding (Calarco, 2011; Khan, 2011; Streib, 2011). From this perspective, no-excuses schools, by emphasizing social control and obedience, reinforce rather than undermine social class differences. Because of these contrasting conceptions, one can see how school leaders believed they were teaching dominant behaviors even as they encouraged self-control and deference.

A second difficulty in translating research on the hidden curriculum to practice is that it is not clear how schools should address these issues. The most advocated solution is culturally relevant or culturally responsive teaching (Ladson-Billings, 1994). Under this approach, teachers build on students' own behaviors and practices to teach dominant ways of speaking or interacting. For example, teachers may do activities that compare how students show attention or ask questions in students' own cultures and at school, affirming students' knowledge while teaching them mainstream norms (Au & Mason, 1981; Heath, 1983). In recent decades, however, culturally responsive teaching has become increasingly marginalized for not producing strong evidence of improving achievement outcomes, a central focus of the accountability movement (Sleeter, 2012). In addition, teachers often lack a clear sense of how to implement culturally responsive teaching, often trivializing it in the form of diversity activities (Sleeter, 2012).

I found that a few of the school staff were cognizant about explaining to students that there was a "time and place" for different behaviors. These staff tended to share similar racial and socioeconomic backgrounds as their students, and saw their efforts as a way to help students

avoid negative stereotypes in the real world.[31] Ms. Scott, for example, admitted that she is also loud at home, but recognized that the students stood out on a recent field trip because they were loud. "[Students] have to also know that even though that's acceptable and fine in your home and with your family, that people are going to judge you and people that you'll need things from will judge you," she explained. Sometimes, students tell her, "Well, this is who I am." "I get that," she said, "but unfortunately, we have to prepare them for the real world and the real world doesn't care about that." Yet teachers who were less familiar with code-switching often forgot to affirm students' opinions and experiences. They focused on correcting student behavior, never acknowledging that these behaviors have a time and place, or that they are connected to power and privilege.

By adopting the justification but not the culturally relevant practices, no-excuses schools may set teachers up to assume cultural deficits in their students. Delpit, who advocates teaching minority children dominant behaviors, cautions that there is a fine line between teaching the culture of power and perpetuating the idea of a culture of poverty. And, indeed, several studies have found that teachers who try to teach minority students appropriate ways of dressing or interacting often draw from and reinforce negative stereotypes (Ferguson, 2001; Morris, 2005; Tyson, 2003; Valenzuela, 1999). Dream Academy's emphasis on teaching students how to behave can lead teachers to think that their students lack basic skills. Ms. Johnson, one of the school's founding teachers, explained that, in the beginning, they were even more explicit about

[31]In her study of black elementary school teachers, Tyson (2003) argues that teachers discipline students because they have *high* expectations for their students' futures. In correcting students' behaviors and dress, black teachers engage in their own resistance practices by helping their students avoid negative stereotypes. Tyson finds that the teachers in her school, however, do not explain to students why they discipline them, and thus inadvertently reinforce the very stereotypes they are trying to overcome.

teaching students everything they needed to know: “Like we didn’t assume that they knew their manners,” she commented. “We didn’t assume that they knew the rules. We didn’t assume they knew how to talk to teachers or talk to each other and things like that.” I also heard many teachers justify the school’s structures by presuming that students lacked structure at home. While this may be the case for some students, Dream Academy’s students tended to come from more involved families because families had to learn about and apply to the school. As one teacher told me, a huge difference she found between families at Dream Academy and her last school is that here parents show up and are supportive. Yet, by assuming that Black and Hispanic students needed to be taught White, middle-class standards, teachers perpetuated a form of cultural racism, failing to draw on the strengths of students, families, and the local neighborhood (White, 2015).

Finally, I believe that an emphasis on middle-class norms diverts attention from the issue of control. Dream Academy adopted its disciplinary system out of a practical and urgent need to establish order, yet no one wanted to talk about control. Wary of being labeled as corrections officers or drill sergeants, school leaders distanced themselves from talk of order and control, instead using other discourses to justify their practices. As Ms. Williams explained, “When I say to parents why we do what we do, it’s not—we’ve got to keep your kids in order. I’m not a corrections officer. This is not a jail; this is not a prison. I’m an educator and I recognize the real goal and the purpose is to, you know, eliminate all distractions.” The underlying question no-excuses schools raise is: Do urban schools need to exert an intense level of control over students to be successful? Do they need to script the moves? Yet, because no-excuses schools talk about maximizing learning or teaching middle-class norms, they refrain from openly discussing social

control and the degree to which schools can and should exert power over children (Goodman, 2013).

In this chapter, I highlighted the unintended consequences of the no-excuses disciplinary system for students as related to their experiences in school and their preparation for the future. Order comes at a significant cost for students. Individual teachers, however, can reduce the negative impact of these disciplinary practices by finding alternative ways to establish control. In the next chapter, I examine how teachers adapt the school's disciplinary system.

CHAPTER 5: BECOMING A DISCIPLINARIAN

"Children size you up immediately," Ms. Turner explained. "And it's kind of like with animals. Dogs can sense fear, like, immediately. And children are the same way." A Black woman in her mid-thirties, Ms. Turner taught in a high-poverty, urban school for five years before coming to Dream Academy. Her first year was horrible. Having grown up in the suburbs and having attended a private Quaker school as a child, she found that she did not know how to interact with her students. She had become a teacher through an alternative certification program and never before worked with kids from urban environments. "Their experience was not mine by any stretch," she commented. "And they could tell and I struggled. But by my fifth year, there was nothing they could get over, and I was well seasoned."

As a first-year teacher, Ms. Turner had many of the characteristics of individuals at high risk of teacher turnover: she was young, not certified, and taught in a high-poverty, urban school (Ingersoll, 2001). In her first school, she received little support from the administration or from other teachers in the school whom she described as "trying to kind of mind their own business." But, through trial and error and weekly reflection, she figured out ways to organize her classroom and structure her students' movements. She planned every moment of the day, leaving no downtime for students to cause mischief. Above all, she learned to convey a sense of authority and control through her very presence. "Being able to stand in front of that room confidently and be able to look a child who's blatantly disrespectful and with just one look and one word put them in their place and know that you've done it respectfully and you haven't broken any laws or anything, that is very valuable," Ms. Turner learned. "And that is something that's hard to teach."

In this chapter, I ask: How do teachers adapt to the school's disciplinary system? Drawing from literature on teacher socialization, I consider how teachers' personal values and embodied dispositions shape their socialization processes. As the example of Ms. Turner shows, becoming an effective disciplinarian takes more than implementing a set of rules and structures. It requires a certain look, an *authoritative presence*—the ability to make the first, right impression. Although Dream Academy tried to implement a teacher-proof system through the use of consistent rules, I found that teachers who were able to command authority through their physical presence had an easier time adapting to—and adapting—the school's disciplinary system.

Learning to Discipline

Discipline is at the forefront of the urban teacher experience. Effective teachers must also have a strong grasp of course content and be responsive to individual student needs, but a teacher cannot be successful without first establishing control (Rosenholtz & Simpson, 1990). In a national survey of 664 public school teachers, 91% percent rated the ability to maintain order and discipline as absolutely essential to being an effective teacher, the highest ranked category (S. Farkas, Johnson, & Foleno, 2000). Yet teachers, especially those in urban schools, often describe their initial experience as a struggle to survive (Ingersoll, 2003). New teachers perceive discipline as their biggest problem (for a review, see Veenman, 1984) and student behavioral problems increase the likelihood of teacher departure (Ingersoll, 2001).

How do teachers learn to discipline? To those unfamiliar with the education profession, it may be surprising to learn that there is no standardized approach to training teachers on how to manage their classrooms—or even how to teach. Teaching is considered to be weakly professionalized (Ingersoll et al., 2012; Lortie, 1975) and training around practical matters of

classroom management weak (Fraser, 2007; Labaree, 2004). In his classic sociological study of teachers, Lortie (1975) argued that teachers do not become inducted into a common culture through formal training. Unlike law students and medical students, they do not use case studies to problem-solve and lack a common technical vocabulary and knowledge. As a result, Lortie argues that teachers often do not know what to expect when they enter the classroom or how to handle problems. "Teaching has not been subjected to the sustained, empirical, and practice-oriented inquiry into problems and alternatives which we find in other university-based professions," Lortie writes. "The result is that to an astonishing degree the beginner in teaching must start afresh, largely uninformed about prior solutions and alternative approaches to recurring practical problems" (p. 69).

Despite decades of research on teaching since Lortie made his observations, his findings continue to be relevant. In an extensive review of the literature, the National Research Council of the National Academies (2010) concluded that little is known about the best ways to train teachers to teach in their subject areas or to teach classroom management. "Teacher education does not exist in the United States," argued Lee Shulman, president of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching and former president of the National Academy of Education. "There is so much variation among all programs in visions of good teaching, standards for admission, rigor of subject matter preparation, what is taught and what is learned, character of supervised clinical experience, and quality of evaluation that compared to any other academic profession, the sense of chaos is inescapable" (Shulman, 2005, p. 7). If teachers are not systematically trained through teacher preparation programs, how then do they learn to teach?

Lortie (1975) argues that teachers learn to teach through *self-socialization*; "one's personal predispositions are not only relevant but, in fact, stand at the core of becoming a

teacher" (p. 79). Because all teachers have observed other teachers in their own schooling, novice teachers have already formed perceptions of what it means to be a good teacher. In contrast to other professions, where novices observe a stark change from lay to professional conceptions of their work, teachers view their early experiences as continuous with their later socialization experiences. As a result, Lortie argues that teachers may be less receptive to training.[32] Teaching techniques are not seen as universally effective but must pass "through the screen of the teacher's self-concept" (p. 77). Through trial and error, teachers learn what techniques work for *them*. More recent research confirms that teachers, to some extent, are self-socialized into the profession. Studies have found that novice teachers hold firm views about teaching that are strongly shaped by their own school experiences and little influenced by their teaching training programs (Borko & Putnam, 1996; Wideen et al., 1998).

The organizational socialization literature refers to this match between the values and norms of an individual and the organization as person-organization fit (Chatman, 1989). In the case of discipline, I argue that person-job fit—the teacher's ability to do the job (Edwards, 1991b)—may also play a significant role in shaping teachers' adaptation strategies. For urban teachers in particular, the ability to do one's job is shaped not only by one's values, but also by one's embodied dispositions. As Ingersoll argues (2003), "Being considered a 'good teacher' means being able to present a convincing appearance of confidence and control" (p. 173-4). When Ms. Turner began as an urban teacher, her words and looks did not cause her students to sit up straight and follow her directions; they did not prevent an eight-year-old from physically

[32]"They portray the process as the acquisition of personally tested practices, not as the refinement and application of generally valid principles of instruction. They insist that influences from others are screened through personal conceptions and subjected to pragmatic trial" (Lortie, 1975, p. 79-80).

assaulting her. Only when she learned how to present her body in a different way did she become an effective disciplinarian.

A few recent studies have integrated ideas of embodiment and habitus into research on occupational socialization (Desmond, 2006; Winchester, 2008). In his study of wildland firefighters, Desmond (2006) argues that it is easier for individuals to adapt to new roles that are more consistent with their *habitus*—embodied ways of perceiving, evaluating, and acting in the world acquired from early childhood experiences (Bourdieu, 1974, 1984). He shows how young men who share a rural, masculine habitus more easily meet the demands of firefighting. Having spent their childhood seeing and feeling the woods, using tools, and speaking and interacting with other males, they have acquired general competencies and dispositions that fit the specific requirements of the job. Although they receive little training on the job, their bodies are already adapted to the new situations they will face. Similarly, a teacher from a working-class background may find it easier to take on a role as an urban school disciplinarian, possessing the right words and stance to command authority. A middle-class teacher who is accustomed to a more flexible, informal style, by contrast, may lack a "sense of the game" when she finds herself in the urban school field (see Bernstein, 1971).

In the next section, I present my findings. First, I discuss how teachers are selected and socialized into the no-excuses culture to show how the school puts significant effort into forming its teachers. While schools long have operated under a "logic of confidence" (Meyer & Rowan, 1977) in which teachers were rarely observed and evaluated, no-excuses schools dedicate significant effort to coaching new teachers, providing them with regular instruction and feedback (Lake et al., 2012). Then, I show how teachers adapt to the school's disciplinary system,

exploring variation by teachers' values and embodied dispositions. I conclude by discussing implications for teacher turnover and standardizing teaching practice.

Making Teachers

No-excuses schools provide an interesting case in which to study teacher socialization because they are trying to change teacher preparation. In 2007, no-excuses leaders controversially started their own graduate school of education, Teacher U (now renamed Relay Graduate School of Education), to emphasize practical, hands-on experience over theoretical knowledge. By examining teacher socialization in a no-excuses school, we can explore how this new type of teacher training interacts with teachers' self-socialization processes. Do teachers' personal values and embodied dispositions play a less central role in their socialization process? Can no-excuses schools make anyone into an effective teacher, or do they need a certain type of material to mold?

To understand how teachers adapt to the school's socialization efforts, we first need to examine how Dream Academy recruits and trains teachers. Dream Academy has a human resources director and associate who oversee the hiring process. Hiring is highly selective; the school hires about one teacher for every 100 applications they receive. Candidates go through a paper screening, a phone screening, a reference check, a school visit, and a teaching demonstration before school leaders discuss whether to make an offer. After teachers are hired, they undergo intense and ongoing training. Despite all these efforts, I will discuss how teacher fit remained a serious issue for the school.

Raw Material

It was a week before the start of school. The staff sat at folding tables set up in the high school gym, going through an exercise in "organizational clarity." Mr. Taylor, the school's

executive director, ran through the school's core values: ensuring measurable outcomes, sweating the small stuff ("And when I say sweat, I mean the kind when you walk up after a run. Think wet towel over the head."), working hard ("The idea that every one of them is going to college is crazy. It's ridiculous"), being good teammates, and investing in students and the community. He acknowledged that staff put in long hours, but then remarked, "How cool is it that I get to work in a place where I can make a difference every single day?"

The teachers caught on to this shared sense of mission as they brainstormed a tagline for the organization. A tagline, like Nike's "just do it" or Avis's "we try harder," brands an organization and what it does. One after another, the aspirations reverberated through the room:

> No boundaries.
> We save lives.
> Believe. Teach. Achieve.
> No limits. No excuses.
> Charting our own destiny.
> Aim high. Achieve more.
> Ensuring our future.
> Defying the status quo.
> Forward ever. Backward never.

Mr. Bradley emphasized that teachers do make a difference. Consistently good teachers over several years make an even bigger difference (Chetty, Friedman, & Rockoff, 2011). Last year, their seventh graders had a math passing rate in the 70th percentile on the state test—down from the 90s—because of one weak math teacher. "We went from having three students who were not proficient in math to a quarter of students," he explained. For the eighth graders he taught, 100% were proficient and over half were advanced proficient.

In recruiting teachers, Dream Academy looks first for "mission-fit," teachers dedicated to urban education and who want to make a difference in the lives of disadvantaged children. The majority of teachers come to Dream Academy because they want to make a difference. Mr.

Taylor explained that he thought the teachers were similar to the individuals you find on Wall Street or Capitol Hill. It was the same pool of smart, hard-working, ambitious young people, each with a slightly different motivation—to make money, to serve the country, to make a difference in children's lives. One teacher applied to Dream Academy after watching *Waiting for Superman*, a documentary featuring successful no-excuses charter schools. Two left finance to do more meaningful work. Another, a reporter who covered education and deaths in the city, came to Dream Academy on an assignment. So impressed by what she saw, she wanted to be a part of a school bringing hope to a city of bad news. Several teachers spoke about how they chose to work in an urban school over a suburban one because they felt like they could do more meaningful work. Not all teachers embraced the "saving" metaphor, as it had overtones of White teachers saving poor Black kids, but almost all wanted to help disadvantaged kids. "Like I didn't need to teach these privileged kids who could get voice lessons and study with people," said Ms. Russo, a White teacher. "I wanted to teach someone who needed me. I have a lot to give to kids and a lot of love and I wanted to love them and help them—help the kids who need music. And the rich kids didn't need music as much."

No-excuses schools in general attract young, energetic, mission-aligned teachers (Lake et al., 2012; S. F. Wilson, 2008). When the hiring managers screen candidates for mission-fit, they look for candidates who want to make a difference, but also for those who have taught in urban schools and recognize that it is different from teaching in suburban schools, or those who majored in urban studies or have had experience in an urban environment. One of the key reasons for emphasizing mission-fit is to get teachers who will persist through the difficult work and who are willing to cede some of their autonomy for the larger mission. "That's first and foremost to me," Ms. Williams explained. "Like you have to be a mission fit in order to be here

and be successful and ultimately feel successful. You have to see the big picture. You have to know that the goals that are set for you are to benefit you, and to help you grow and become better." Because no-excuses schools are "greedy institutions" (Coser, 1974) that demand the exclusive commitment of their staff, they look for teachers who are willing to sacrifice their personal lives for the sake of the larger mission.

After mission fit, Dream Academy seeks "coachable" teachers who will be open and responsive to feedback. They expect teachers to be malleable and attribute their lack of success to their resistance to correction. The school takes an active role in developing teachers to be successful even if they struggle at first. As one staff member put it, "The school will help you become a better teacher but you have to want to be here." The school is less concerned with teachers lacking particular skills or experience in the classroom; in fact, some leaders worry that teachers with too much experience will not be a good fit because they are more set in their ways. Because the school's expectations are so firm, teachers who have been successful in other urban schools will not necessarily excel here. Ms. Wasulik, for example, struggled with classroom management at Dream Academy even though she had previously won the Teacher of the Year award in her previous school—a high-needs urban school in the same city. Another teacher told the story of a co-worker at another no-excuses school who had previously taught for 11 years in a rural context. He was a very accomplished teacher but "now he's coming here to a no-excuses school and he's got his head turned around because he's got to learn all of these new techniques for delivering his lessons."

Ms. Brand, a White teacher who had taught for one year in an urban school, is a good example of a coachable teacher. She received little guidance in her previous school and struggled with classroom management. During her interview at Dream Academy, she was told that the

school was looking at another candidate who had 10 years of experience. They asked her why they should hire her. She explained how she recognized that she was a novice. "Like I can't say that I know how to do everything perfectly, so the more feedback, I guess, the better I am because that's something I can implement," she said in her interview. "If I don't get feedback, then I'm going to keep making the same mistakes. So I'd rather just hear from people who know." In the end, she received the job offer.

By emphasizing mission fit and coachability, Dream Academy seeks raw material to mold. They are less interested in hiring professionals who have specialized skills, knowledge, and training and may desire greater autonomy, but instead, want teachers who will benefit from, and be responsive to, the school's intensive coaching. From here, the school takes over to transform novices into experts.

Hard Work

Like most no-excuses schools, Dream Academy demands a lot from its staff. To explain the intense work culture, the human resources director tells applicants that people at the school do not take much vacation. They get 10 personal days but most take 2. Both the school year and school day are longer; for teachers, this translates into working 11 months a year, from 7 am to 4 pm, with additional hours for weekly staff meetings and professional development. At one board meeting I attended, a board member suggested recruiting effective teachers from the local public schools. Mr. Taylor explained that, in seven recruitment seasons, they have not had more than 20 of these teachers apply. A parent, who was also a teacher at one of the local schools, commented that public school teachers would not come here because of the lower salary[33] and the longer

[33]During my fieldwork, Dream Academy brought in an outside consulting organization to review their teacher policies and practices. As a result, the school developed a new, performance-based compensation system to be more competitive with their peers. Novice teacher salaries begin at

hours. She begins work at 8:40 am and clocks out at 3:25 pm; she knows people who clock out at 2:45 pm.

From new teachers to seasoned veterans, teachers work hard, often 60-70 hours a week. Ms. Harvey, a White, second-year Teach for America teacher, regularly sleeps four hours a night. On top of her school responsibilities, she is taking two classes to get her master's degree. Mr. McCudden, a White teacher who was new to the school, does not want to take work home, so he stays at school late, sometimes until 9 pm. "I have 8 years of teaching experience and my head is barely above water," he told a group of prospective teachers. Teachers universally complain that teaching infringes on their personal lives, and many doubt whether they can continue teaching here once they have families. Ms. Wallace, a successful and popular White third-year teacher, flat-out told me that the job was not sustainable because it required so much of her time. "My husband is really resentful about this place and the time that I spend and the amount of energy it takes."

The no-excuses teacher is a far cry from Meyer and Rowan's (1977) autonomous, unobserved teacher. When the school implemented its evaluation system, no teacher scored above a 72. The first year of my fieldwork, only four teachers received an A on their teaching evaluations. Teacher evaluations are based on an extensive rubric, where teachers are rated from 1-5 points (Unacceptable to Outstanding) on 23 measures. These measures fit into five broader categories, "Ensure Measurable Student Learning" (30%), "Model the Core Values" (15%), "Sweat the Small Stuff" (20%), "Work Hard" (20%), and "Be a Good Teammate" (15%). "I don't necessarily know if it will ever feel good to get an evaluation from here because it's always

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$50,000 but a master teacher can earn close to $100,000 after five years at the school with exemplary performance. Unlike the public school districts, Dream Academy does not pay higher amounts for master's degrees.

like very cutthroat about what needs to be done," said Ms. Johnson, the teacher who had started the mentoring program for boys and spent nearly every weekend taking a group of boys out. She has consistently scored lowest on the "work hard" category. "I never feel like the hard work is ever enough," she explained. "Because you're like, wait, I work 12 hour days, five days a week and sometimes six or seven." No matter how much she does, she feels like the school is always asking for more.

The intense workload is cited by teachers at no-excuses schools as a key reason for their departure (Torres, 2014b; Woodworth et al., 2008) and a limiting factor in scaling up these schools (S. F. Wilson, 2008; Yeh, 2013). In a survey the school administered to its teachers, less than one-third of teachers believed that their workload was sustainable over the long-term. Yet, positive working conditions can make an intense workload more manageable. Using survey data from one large no-excuses network, Torres (2014b) found that teacher workload was strongly correlated with teacher turnover. However, once working conditions were accounted for, teacher workload was no longer a significant predictor of turnover. Instead, the strongest predictor of teacher turnover was the school's disciplinary system.[34] In another study interviewing teachers who had left no-excuses schools, Torres (2014a) found that teachers cited their discomfort with disciplinary approaches and their limited autonomy to change these approaches as central reasons for leaving their jobs. In the next section, I examine the school's intensive efforts to socialize teachers into its disciplinary system. It is this process of learning to manage student behavior that is some of the hardest work that teachers are asked to do.

[34]Teachers who were in greater agreement that the school disciplinary system minimized the time spent on discipline had lower odds of leaving the school.

New Toolkits

No-excuses schools ask for more than hard work from their teachers. Getting teachers to manage their classrooms in a very specific way is at the center of school efforts and at the root of many teacher struggles. As Mr. Bradley argued in one leadership meeting, "Ninety percent of our coaching is around technique and not content."

No-excuses schools believe that behind the magical urban teacher is a set of concrete teaching strategies. Doug Lemov, managing director of one large no-excuses network, observed effective urban teachers and identified 49 common practices, which he named (e.g., "No Opt Out," "Do It Again," and "SLANT") and compiled into a best-selling handbook, *Teach Like a Champion* (TLAC). This handbook has become the bible of no-excuses schools and a central part of their teaching training (Lemov, 2010). Lemov's techniques provide specific, concrete actions that teachers can practice, such as how to use a strong voice when delivering a lesson. This new toolkit of strategies (Swidler, 1986) is largely embodied: teachers learn new ways of seeing, speaking, and interacting rather than new methods of teaching math or writing. From Lemov's perspective, techniques to establish control and increase engagement are more important than a particular educational philosophy: "Mastering those techniques will be far more productive than being firm of convictions, committed to a strategy, and, in the end, beaten by the reality of what lies inside the classroom door in the toughest neighborhoods of our cities and towns," he writes (2010, p. 4).

Training in these techniques begins with a two-week summer orientation for teachers. The next two weeks of school, when students arrive for their orientation, is also aimed at helping new teachers learn these techniques. Veteran teachers lead these sessions, with new teachers observing their practices. Veteran teachers model TLAC techniques like Tight Transitions

(technique #30), timing how long it takes students to enter the classroom and begin their Do Now (#29). They scan for 100 Percent (#36) compliance with directions, having students Do It Again (#39), repeating procedures until they are executed satisfactorily.[35] After school, teachers also participate in workshops on these techniques. Following these initial training opportunities, new teachers take to the classrooms, and the heart of the socialization process begins. Each week, teachers are observed by their supervisors (usually for 10 minutes or so), sometimes video-taped, and given same-day feedback. Finally, through weekly, 30-minute, one-on-on meetings, supervisors work directly with teachers on their techniques. In a school survey, almost all teachers agreed that the school was committed to improving their practice.

To try to make feedback more manageable, supervisors zero in on a bite-sized technique frequently taken from TLAC. Supervisors stick with the key lever until they feel that teachers have mastered it. During one supervisory meeting I observed, Ms. Costello discussed a key lever with Mr. Henig, a White Teach for America teacher who was new to the school but had taught for a few years. "Giving consequences," the key lever, was one of the ways to gain student compliance under the "100 Percent" technique. Although Lemov warns teachers not to rely on giving consequences, teachers and supervisors often resorted to this last option.[36]

"I am failing miserably," Mr. Henig said, matter-of-factly.

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[35]Although Lemov's handbook covers planning and instructional techniques, the school focuses first on the strategies for managing behavior. Classroom management is the most difficult challenge for all new teachers, and the school believes that order must be established before learning can take place. Although school administrators recognize that good teaching contributes to effective management, they also believe that it will be more difficult for novice teachers to manage their classroom if they use more interactive teaching strategies.

[36]Lemov offers five others, such as using a nonverbal intervention like gesturing for eye contact or a positive group correction, such as "Everyone should have their books open to page 6." New teachers also used these techniques but often failed to get students to comply without the threat of a consequence. Leaders speculated that teachers might not exude confidence when they used the techniques or not use them consistently enough.

"Why?"

"I think it's overwhelming, does that makes sense?"

"No, no, actually, can you give examples?"

He explained how the students would not follow his directions.

"The behaviors won't stop unless you implement the system," Ms. Costello insisted. "You have yet to deliver a consequence."

She showed him the video of his classroom, pausing to point out students' calling out, having their heads down and legs up. "Did you notice that while you're teaching, do you see that there's seven kids' heads down or do you see that when you ask a question, nobody raised their hand and there were like three side conversations? Do you see it?" More insistent than she had been in previous meetings, Ms. Costello made clear his choices.

"To be fair, I'm not giving you a choice, you must deliver a consequence."

"I'm scared to do it. I don't want to take away things from the kids."

"It's not being mean. You have to keep them accountable. Even if you don't want to be the bad guy, these behaviors are not getting them to college. Once you add the consequence, you're going to get push back, then you're going to see results."

Exchanges like these reflect the difficulty supervisors faced in getting teachers to implement the school's behavioral system. Despite the ongoing coaching of effective teachers like Ms. Costello, new teachers faced both practical and ideological challenges. First, Mr. Henig did not even notice the misbehaviors he was supposed to correct. This was a problem typical of new teachers. During one leadership meeting, Ms. Anderson suggested putting together a narrative for observations to help structure teachers' attention (see Zerubavel, 1997) because "new teachers don't know what to see." Mr. Bradley explained how he coached one new teacher

every day for the last couple weeks, pointing out bags on desks. A second problem was that Mr. Henig did not feel comfortable being "mean" to students because he did not view this as supporting students. New teachers often wanted to be their students' friends and were resistant to being disliked.

Overwhelmed and frustrated, supervisors quickly learned that training teachers to implement the school's disciplinary system was no simple process. Even when teachers made progress with key levers, they often forgot to implement old key levers once they had moved onto new ones. Supervisors also felt overwhelmed by the number of different skills that new teachers had to acquire. "This model works really, really well for the third- or fourth-year teacher who's really reflective," complained Ms. Costello. "For the novice teacher, it's overwhelming." When she walked into a new teacher's room, she immediately noticed ten things wrong. When she walked in again, she noticed ten more things. To get teachers to implement strategies, supervisors learned that they had to teach and re-teach specific techniques as well as win teacher buy-in.

How Teachers Respond

Mr. McCudden, a 30-year-old, White man from the Midwest, began his teaching experience as part of a service corps program run through his university. He taught for two years in an underfunded, understaffed urban school in Cleveland, while also being a full-time student. He taught Spanish, social studies, and gym, and coached two sports teams. His mentor—the school's principal—tried to be supportive but she was busy "fighting to keep the school open" and observed him only once over the semester. "It was really fending for myself," he said. "And I grew a lot in understanding kids and understanding how to relate to them. But I didn't grow a lot as a professional, and learning how to teach well." In his two years at the school, the only

lesson plans he wrote were for his graduate school portfolio to get certified. In contrast, at Dream Academy, he feels like he has less freedom but is growing as a teacher. "And now I feel more professional," he reflected. "And I'm really glad for a lot of the feedback and a lot of the time that is spent observing."

Ms. Larkin, a 24-year-old, White, first-year teacher from California, has had a different experience at Dream Academy. Like Mr. McCudden, she feels that she has learned a lot during the school year and is grateful for this training. Yet, she also feels constrained by the school's set practices. Prior to teaching at Dream Academy, she student-taught in an urban school with a Montessori philosophy that emphasized exploration and individualized approaches to managing student behavior. She wants to develop students' social and emotional skills, but felt "this pushback of, well you don't know how it's done then." When she proposed alternative teaching or behavioral practices to her supervisor, she felt like her ideas were dismissed. "Well, you just haven't had enough experience. You're a first-year teacher, you don't know what you're talking about kind of a thing," she explained. "Everything started getting put in the context of, you're a first year teacher, what do you know?"

Why these different reactions? Why do some teachers feel very successful, treated like professionals, while others feel treated like novices? Through an inductive process, I identified four teacher types based on their individual adaptation strategies: the naturals, the imitators, the adaptors, and the rejecters. As ideal types, these types provide an analytical lens to examine teachers' strategies. While teachers tended to primarily fall into one of these categories, many also combined different strategies and shifted strategies over time.

I argue that both teachers' value fit (i.e., commitment to the school's practices) and bodily fit (i.e., habitus) shape their ability to adapt to the disciplinary requirements of the job.

The *naturals* are those whose habitus aligns well with their role requirements; they feel very much at home implementing the school's behavioral practices and thus largely agree with them.[37] Among teachers who do not possess a habitus that aligns with their new roles, I found three teacher strategies. The *imitators* learn to discipline by copying other teachers. They vary along a spectrum from those who are committed to the school's disciplinary practices to those who go along with them in a half-hearted way. The *adaptors* modify school practices to better fit their personal dispositions and styles; they are often ambivalent about school disciplinary practices but accept them in part. The *rejecters* possess neither the right bodily fit or value fit. They choose to not strictly follow school practices, and most ultimately exit from the institution.

Naturals

Naturals are teachers who have a natural fit with the demands of the job. Although Lemov and his colleagues argue that great teachers are made not born, some teachers do feel a natural affinity for the urban teacher role. By natural, I mean that these teachers have a personal habitus that is consistent with the demands of the job, making them instinctually more competent at performing their role (Desmond, 2006). Unlike their peers, they do not have to rework their bodies into new stances and deeper intonations, nor do they wrestle as fiercely with whether they want to do what they are asked. They operate with an "unthinking ease" (Bourdieu, 1974, 1984), acting in ways similar to what they are accustomed to in everyday life. The majority of school's practices make sense to them.

[37]While there could be teachers who possess an authoritative demeanor but disagree with the school's practices, I did not find any teachers who fit into this category. I think the means and ends reinforce each other—teachers who can effectively discipline do not express strong reservations about the disciplinary system. Similarly, those who cannot manage their classrooms question the effectiveness of the school's model.

Two of the star teachers in the school, both female, White, and of larger stature, fit this type well. Although they both come from middle-class backgrounds, they share an assertive personality. "I'm very authoritarian by nature," Ms. Anderson said. "Like, it's in my personality to be domineering, and … it works for me in that way." She feels very comfortable sweating the small stuff because of her personality. Ms. Costello, a former rugby player, also found it second-nature to comply with the school's disciplinary practices. "I never really thought about what I did, it just kind of fit," she said. "As far as just, like, generally just having a demeanor that gets the kids' attention, I think that that's something I just have." When her friends or family have come in to watch her teach, they comment on how she interacts with the kids the same way she interacts with them. "I don't talk to the kids differently than I talk in my life."

Dream Academy has a high proportion of teachers who describe themselves as aggressive. In a staff meeting in which teachers took a Meyers-Briggs style personality test, the table of "dominant" teachers was the largest. Individuals with this leadership style tend to be blunt, direct, and demanding, focused on overcoming obstacles to success. They fit the no-excuses culture well. In contrast, only four teachers (including the school nurse and English Second Language teacher) sat at the "steadiness" table, people who emphasize cooperation and support. "There's a lot of strong women in our school in general," Mr. McCudden commented. "Weak people don't survive at our school. You cannot be a person that get's walked all over."

Among the first-year teachers, Ms. Evans had the strongest classroom management. A 26-year-old, Black, TFA alumna, she did not smile for the first weeks and could be seen marching her students in and out of the classroom multiple times each day until they complied with her directions for silence. Ms. Evans' success resulted not only from her close adherence to the school's disciplinary practices, but also from her ability to convey to students that she meant

business. She had what Willard Waller (1932) hails as the teacher's voice. Through the voice, Waller argues, students gain a sense for "whether a teacher really means what he is saying and is quite sure that there will be no argument about it, whether he means it and thinks that there may arise some discussion, whether he is trying to convince himself, whether he is trying to bluff someone else, etc." (p. 227).

Why is this voice and demeanor so important? Teachers cannot endlessly march students in and out of classrooms, or waste entire class periods waiting for their students to keep silent. They cannot solely rely on consequences to get students to comply because not all students will respond to consequences. Thus, teachers themselves must command authority. Mr. McCudden recounted how a few of his students tried to explain to him why students listened to Ms. Evans more than they did to him. They explained that they both disciplined and sometimes yelled, but "Ms. E, when she yells, she really means it. She throws down." While students complied with Ms. Evans' demands, they often laughed at other teachers when they spoke more sternly. As a Black woman, Ms. Evans more closely shared a cultural style of communication with her students; however, White teachers who were aggressive also were able to "throw down."

A key advantage that teachers with an authoritative presence have is that they can balance a strict demeanor with a softer side. Although no-excuses schools are often criticized for being overly strict, they want their teachers to be warm/strict. A teacher who is warm/strict, #45 on Lemov's list, is described as "caring, funny, warm, concerned, and nurturing—and also strict, by the book, relentless, and sometimes inflexible" (Lemov, 2010, p. 4). One October afternoon, for example, Ms. Evans sat with a group of new teachers over lunch, explaining how she recently started putting on a smile. While the other teachers were struggling with becoming stricter, she was working on becoming friendlier. Although she sometimes still had to revert to being strict,

she found herself able to joke around with students but know when to bring it back. Both Ms. Anderson and Ms. Costello were also considered to be among the school's strictest teachers, but they lightened their classroom with humor and competitions.

Ms. Wallace, a third-year, White teacher in the school, did not appear at first glance to be a natural. She was enthusiastic in the classroom, occasionally standing on top of desks and organizing impromptu town hall sessions. She smiled, snapped her fingers when excited, and incorporated interactive activities into her teaching. I was surprised when she told me that she was aggressive in how she spoke with kids during her first year as a teacher. "I wanted it to be very clear that I'm not afraid of you," she explained. "Now, in hindsight, I would never talk to a child that way but I have a very aggressive, assertive personality." Because she gained students' respect, over time, she was able to show less of her strict side and more warmth, making her one of students' favorite teachers (see Chapter 6).

Imitators

Do only natural teachers succeed? Must teachers possess a certain presence and look to be successful in an urban school? Although natural teachers may find their stride more quickly, teachers can develop an authoritative presence. I found that Dream Academy's intensive teacher coaching did help some teachers pick up on management techniques. I call this group of teachers *imitators* because they try to copy the methods and mannerisms of successful teachers.

Ms. Phelps, a new teacher at the school, provides a good example of how a teacher can learn the disciplinarian role without having the more ingrained habitus that natural teachers possess. Ms. Phelps is a 28-year-old, White woman who grew up in the suburbs and attended a state university where she studied psychology and education. She is quiet and was not one of the

dominant personality-type teachers prevalent at the school. Yet she was considered one of the toughest teachers at Dream Academy.

Ms. Phelps was not always tough. In fact, during the years she taught in a suburban school, she described her management style as "very lax." Although her students tried to get away with things, she found that her classroom was not chaotic, because of the nature of the environment, not her management. She admitted to not having a clue as to what she was getting herself into when she took a job in an urban charter school. Luckily, she had a co-teacher who was very good at classroom management and displayed the warm/strict style:

> She was tough. Like it was like a tough love sort of thing. And [the students] like looked up to her a lot because she was young and African American and came from like a city. You know, she came from like Jersey City and she was younger than me so she—I think she was like maybe 24. So she was young and they saw somebody like them being successful. And they know how to talk to—like I don't know. I mean, I know I grew up in a White household, obviously. And I'll never forget when I tried to yell at them one time they laughed because I sounded like a mouse.

In contrast to her co-teacher, Ms. Phelps lacked the appropriate ways of speaking to and disciplining children. As she put it, it was "a totally different way than what I grew up with." While she sounded like a mouse, she felt that her co-teacher yelled at students in the same way that students' parents yelled at them.

After her school closed for restructuring, she was hired at Dream Academy. She found that something snapped into place. "I guess then I came here and was just like, well, I'm not gonna be the roll-over teacher," she reflected. She recognized the change in herself into a strict teacher when she was approached by a few of her former students who had also transferred to Dream Academy. They confronted her one afternoon: "You have become mean, what happened to you?"

What helped Ms. Phelps adapt a sterner demeanor? One factor was observing and imitating other teachers. Ms. Phelps recalled how helpful it was when Mr. Bradley pulled her aside during the first weeks of class to point out different things to her about management. At her last school, she had also picked up techniques from observing other teachers who were effective and ineffective at controlling their classes. Another key factor was Ms. Phelps' commitment to change. Because of her previous experience in an urban school, she was convinced that things would go haywire if she was not as strict with her students. "I mean I feel like … because of seeing last year and how it was when it wasn't structured and everything else," she explained, "I guess I buy into it a lot more than people who haven't really come from that and seen that." While she had developed positive relationships with her students at her last school, she also felt like she had sent the message to the students that they could walk all over her. She speculated that her change in style might be a natural progression of working in an urban environment. Another teacher expressed a similar sentiment: "I thought [the structure] was crazy a little bit when I first got to [Dream Academy], but I valued it, too, once I kind of saw what it was able to accomplish."

While Ms. Phelps strongly agrees with the school's disciplinary model, imitators do not all show such strong commitment. Most new teachers are imitators to at least some degree—they follow school systems because they are required to. In addition, because many teachers are fairly new to teaching, they depend on the school systems to manage their classrooms. While they may harbor some doubts about the strictness of the school's approach, they tend not to have strong ideological commitments and are fairly coachable. Imitation is possible, if teachers are willing to give it a try, but this strategy is not without its challenges.

One challenge that imitators face is that they may not appear natural. Especially in the early stages when teachers are still learning to adopt new stances and tones, they may appear quite awkward. Mr. Henig was one example. He had a more relaxed style, liked to talk, and enjoyed getting to know kids inside and outside of school. As he started adapting the school's disciplinary practices, I wrote in my fieldnotes: "This feels like a very different teacher—not like himself. His students like him, I get the sense, and are quiet for him, so it seems odd that he's getting frustrated and trying to monitor them especially because he's not doing anything that would really require their attention—they are just writing down correct answers." The students did not respond well to Mr. Henig's attempts to adopt a stricter style and they resisted more after he tried to adhere to school procedures. Throughout the school year, he never seemed quite comfortable in his new teacher skin, perhaps in part due to his lack of commitment to the model and his reservations in disciplining students.

Imitators can also become too mechanical. Without an easy ability to wield authority, these teachers run the risk of being perceived as overly strict and inflexible. During one parent association meeting, several parents raised concerns that the new teachers were too mechanical. They felt that more experienced teachers did not have to jump on everything and assign detentions left and right. "I feel a lot of rules allow them to be robots," one parent commented. The school leaders also recognized this problem. In speaking to the new teachers, Ms. Scott advised them, "We can't be so focused on the rules. I know it sounds like an oxymoron because we're supposed to be on the same page—but we are still dealing with children."

Ms. Phelps is still figuring out how to strike the right balance between being warm and strict. She is usually at the high end of giving out detentions and receives the lowest marks on

student surveys evaluating how much they like their teachers. She sometimes goes overboard on the discipline as both her co-teachers noted.

"And so, it's just like you see a lot of these blatant power trips sometimes in classrooms where like the teacher just – and I'm not excusing myself," said one of her co-teachers. "I know I've even like done several—"

"But I did notice when I watched you the other day that you weren't so –," I interrupted. "You did this, okay, let's take a moment. Calm down. And you know, it was a different way—"

"It was a different way," she agreed. "I felt like the other teacher I co-teach with uses the discipline system almost to her detriment because – you know, I think now the kids see her, like they have this – she has this clipboard in there, and they're like petrified if she writes down their name on a clipboard. And that's not what I feel like the no-excuses model is about, or maybe it is."

Although Ms. Phelps has not found the perfect balance, she is happy at the school and feels like she has grown more this year in both management and instruction than she had in her previous four years of teaching. If she remains at the school, she will likely be able to build stronger relationships with students, which other teachers cite as a factor that makes the second year much easier than the first. Eventually, the school's practices may become "second nature."

Adaptors

Adaptors take a different strategy than imitators—they modify school practices to better fit their own style. Adaptation is not a free-for-all; adaptors accept the basic parameters of the discipline system but make modifications to better fit their personal styles. Of course, adaptors do imitate as well but they also maintain parts of their own personalities in implementing the

school's disciplinary practices. I characterize them as having moderate buy-in to the school's practices.

Ms. Beckerman, a White, first-year special education teacher, figured out how to sweat the small stuff in a way that she feels is less authoritarian. By creating little chants or positively framing her corrections, she tries to make school rules more fun. Finding this balance between being strict and fun "really, really works" and produces less student push-back. She told me:

> I try to push my personality into each standard … For 100%, I had a rhyme, 'eyes on me, if you want to be … successful!' … I think I tried to push as much fun into applying the TLAC strategies so it was less noticeable so that the students don't notice they're being asked to sit like this … [For 'Do it again']—it was just positive framing, 'I know you want to reverse that and bring it around!' Make it sound like it was their choice when it really isn't. 'I know you like things perfect so let's try it again.' So to get eyes on me, I'd say, 'Put your game faces on, put on your war paint and point at your target.' The kids would look at me like I was crazy …"

Mr. Purcell, also a White teacher new to the school, is also an adaptor. In the first weeks of school, Mr. Purcell's orchestra class looked like a mess. He struggled to get students to keep silent, and on many days, failed to even begin his lesson. Prior to coming to Dream Academy, he had not given much thought to classroom management. He had taught for a year at an elite boarding school, where he had no problems managing a class. With a laid-back style and proclivity for humming lines of music and dancing in class, he did not naturally command authority. Even though he tried to adhere to school rules, he did not succeed in putting on a convincing act.

Watching his class the first month, I had a feeling that he was not going to succeed at Dream Academy. Yet, returning to his class a few weeks later, I was surprised to see students coming together to play music. When I asked Mr. Purcell what had happened, he told me, "I remember one morning where I came in and was like, I'm not going to do this today. I can't do

it. We're just gonna play music." Once the students started playing music, he found that many of the behavioral issues disappeared. "And that was like the best class I've ever had."

This alternative approach worked for him and he stuck to it. By rejecting some of the school's prescriptions but following others, Mr. Purcell found a way to manage his class and get on with the music:

> I'm not going to do anything where I wait for absolute silence to start because that's just—it's not gonna happen. And the kids will get frustrated and we won't do anything in class. So one of my biggest—like get-the-class-together effort—is just to start something. Like just count off, half the kids will start playing, the other half … they're supposed to be playing and they're not and they'll sort of like fumble forward and then I'll stop and then I'll start again. I don't have to say a whole lot to do that. I don't have to get angry at them.

Like many of the successful teachers, he now feels more like himself in the classroom. When he had tried to closely follow the school's systems, he had found himself becoming angry and frustrated. "At the beginning I was not, not as much there and like really strict. And it didn't work," he observed. "And so actually, when I came back to sort of being who I felt comfortable being, being myself it worked out a lot better."

Mr. Purcell does not feel like he compromised the school's goals but rather misunderstood the nature of the goals. In contrast to the imitators, he follows the spirit of the goals, not their exact prescriptions. "I had too high of expectations on 100%," he said, referring to Lemov's technique to "expect 100% of students to do what you ask 100% of the time, 100% of the way." At the start of the year, Mr. Purcell had tried to imitate the other music teacher who waited for all students to be silent before they started playing. When he realized that his classroom would not look like her classroom—"not this year, maybe in the future"—he felt the freedom to select the techniques that worked for him and adapt the ones that did not. Although

he was skeptical about the school's behavioral practices at first, he has come to appreciate the TLAC method and its accompanying textbook and videos.

For Mr. Purcell and other adaptors, their practices have to align with their personal dispositions and values. Ms. Anderson, Mr. Purcell's supervisor, noted how she could be very prescriptive with a lot of teachers, but not with him:

> [He] needs to see, like, the rationale behind everything. And, like, once he understands it, he figures out to do it and he implements it. It has to come almost from him though. You have to show him the explicit value in it in order for him to do it. And I think once he started seeing that, 'Okay, well, I can try to figure out how this works in my classroom without it compromising the integrity of what it is that I'm trying to do.' Or perhaps his mindset changed to, 'Well, this is perhaps the better way of doing things.' But the funny thing is … I think that his style really hasn't changed.

Ms. Anderson recognizes that Mr. Purcell's values and style have to be consistent with his practices. Mr. Purcell needs to feel a sense of ownership over his classroom, even if his choices ultimately reflect much of the school's prescribed model. Consistent with Lortie's (1975) description of self-socialization, for Mr. Purcell, teaching practices have to filter through his own teaching ideals and experiences; they have to work for him.

In a typical school setting where teachers learn by trial and error, the adaptors comprise the majority of teachers. At no-excuses schools where school-wide consistency is prized, these numbers are smaller. One reason why Mr. Purcell may have had more flexibility in implementing school systems is because music is seen as an extracurricular activity, not a subject that is tested on state exams. Similarly, Ms. Beckerman works in smaller group settings and has more time to get to know students on an individual basis, giving her the flexibility to be less rigid with them. For other teachers, the amount that they can adapt school practices is limited. Ms. Johnson, one of the school's founding teachers, felt like she deserved more freedom in her classroom because she has a track record of improving student test scores. She believed that her

own creativity and enthusiasm for teaching waned as the school placed more emphasis on consistency. "But I feel like for me, the more I try to do 100% and the more I try to worry about certain things, like I lost the zest for the actual content," she said. One challenge that arises in standardizing teacher practice is that teachers may not be able to adapt school practices to better fit their individual styles and values, diminishing teachers' commitment to their work (Ingersoll, 2006).

Rejecters

Instead of finding ways to adapt themselves to the system or adapt the system to themselves, the last type of teacher rejects the system entirely. Rejecters tend to come from elite colleges and graduate schools of education and have formulated more specific ideals of teaching, such as fostering students' socio-emotional skills or engaging in hands-on learning. Unable to put aside their ideological commitments or unable to adapt their bodies to the disciplinary role, most of these teachers end up leaving the school, some after only a few months.

Ms. Armstrong, a 26-year-old, White, Ivy League graduate and first-year teacher, began the school year with a bright smile. She exuded enthusiasm in her classroom and her students warmed to her. After school, she happily helped students hanging around her classroom with homework and bought snacks for them from the local bodega. By October, however, her smile had disappeared. Unable to control her class, Ms. Armstrong found herself dreading her students and wanting to quit.

During a supervisory meeting, Ms. Anderson narrowed in on what she perceived to be the root of Ms. Armstrong's problem—her commitment to the disciplinary model.

"Do you really believe you can sweat the details at a high level?" Ms. Anderson asked. A few seconds of silence elapsed.

"I want to."

"Do you believe it's helpful?"

"I think it would be helpful—what's working now is not working—I need to really slow it down, with the pencils …" Ms. Armstrong began. "I was talking to my former teacher, and he says you just need to match their energy and enthusiasm. When I slow it down, I lose my enthusiasm, my energy."

"What do you mean by slowing it down?" Ms. Anderson interrupted.

"Slowing it down to make sure all the pencils are down."

"When things click in, you are a superstar teacher. Is it a mindset thing or is it, 'I don't know how to do it'?"

"I don't think I can't do it, I'm not sure how to do it."

"I still want you to think really hard if this is something you really think you can do. This is not a question of whether you can do it. I know you can do it. Embrace your bitch. You have to be unrelenting. No, it's not ok to put your head down. You're not their friend. That may be the part you love."

"It's so hard." She took another deep breath. "It's so hard—knowing I have to do that everyday." She put her head back again.

"But that's every urban environment. But if you really want what some of the more experienced teachers have, they all did it. You have a mean teacher look, you need to use it more. I'm telling you it's gonna set you up for more success."

In this exchange, Ms. Anderson focuses on Ms. Armstrong's commitment to the school's disciplinary model, viewing this as the primary barrier to her success. Yet Ms. Armstrong is also trying to articulate how, in trying to become a disciplinarian, she does not feel like herself. She

feels inauthentic when trying to be stern; her enthusiasm and energy for the material dissipate when she has to constantly attend to student behaviors. As much as Ms. Anderson wants her to use her mean-teacher look and embrace her bitch, Ms. Armstrong does not find it easy to *physically* adapt her body to the demands of the job. She told me:

> Being, like, unsmiling and authoritarian and stern stresses me out. Like it makes me feel unhappy and it makes me feel inauthentic and so that was like the struggle that I was having because trying to come into every classroom, not smiling and like trying, you know, holding kids accountable for everything and like every little moment and motion and anything that they did, like just, it was very trying. It is very trying on my psyche sometimes.

More than any other teacher, Ms. Armstrong most clearly articulates this feeling of being disconnected from herself in trying to adapt to an unfamiliar role. This sense of detachment became clear to her when she had a corrections officer who was considering a second career in teaching observe her classes. After a few classes, the woman explained that the students were acting just like her prisoners because both groups did not want to be there. For Ms. Armstrong, it was a very discouraging comment. "I feel like I'm watching myself standing there, frustrated," she said. "It's an out-of-body experience."

A significant issue for Ms. Armstrong is the misalignment between her own habitus and the expectations for her to be stern and unsmiling. Commitment, however, also does play a role in her ability to adapt, as Ms. Anderson perceived. Like Mr. Purcell, Ms. Armstrong finds it difficult to feel committed to the school's disciplinary practices when they are not her own ideas. She explained to me how if she tries her own idea and it fails, she will try something else. But if it's someone else's idea, off the bat, she already thinks that it will not work. "Like the kids not feeling invested in education," she told me. "It's just like how I don't feel invested in the teaching. I face this mental conflict everyday."

Having gone back to school to obtain a teaching certificate after working in the business field, Ms. Armstrong had planned to pursue teaching as a career path. As such, she expected more autonomy in the classroom, contrasting herself with the Teach for America teachers who see their two-year assignment as more of an internship. She knows from experience that students can learn in different types of structures. When she was working as a student-teacher in an urban public school, her students did a three-day project on the French Revolution. The first day, the kids didn't do anything for 85 minutes. She told her co-teacher that it was a waste of time. "You have to let them flop," he told her. "That's how they learn." He explained that kids have to learn to do it themselves; teachers cannot always be telling them what to do. "They're 12, 13," she countered. But by the third day, the students created great projects—they made books and performed skits. "Yes, it was loud, crazy, but they learned." At Dream Academy, she did not have the freedom to spend three days on a project, let alone 50 minutes. She found her supervisor resistant to the idea of group work because her management was still weak. Thus, unlike Mr. Purcell, Ms. Armstrong found less room to adapt. Lacking the power to control how she instructed or disciplined students, Ms. Armstrong became detached from her work outcomes (Gecas & Schwalbe, 1983).

If Ms. Armstrong could have adapted herself more easily to the disciplinarian role or adapted the role to fit her own style, she may have been more likely to accept the school's methods. In fact, she did show more buy-in at certain points in the year when student behavior was improving. Other teachers, however, are fundamentally opposed to the school's methods. Ms. Larkin has a different vision for her students and for herself as a teacher. "I went into teaching not just to teach them whatever's on the board, whatever's in a book, but really to help

[students] grow as people," she said. "And it's just been really hard to do that, because of the system that's in place."

At her previous school—an urban Montessori—students were pulled out and spoken to when they caused problems. "It was never seen as you're doing something wrong," Ms. Larkin explained. "You're not going to go to college because you can't do this. It was, you need to go outside for a little bit and run around." When she first arrived at Dream Academy, she envisioned creating a classroom where students felt safe and knew they would not be punished or yelled at. Growing up in a suburban school, she never remembered a teacher yelling at students. When she first arrived, it was a huge shock to see kids and teachers yelling down the hall. When students did something wrong, she did not want to issue a detention but instead preferred to talk students through the issue: "Why did you do that? How can we fix this?" She wanted to help students learn to make real choices for themselves, "to develop a sense of control over their own behavior instead of just me controlling it and saying this was wrong, here's detention."

At the start of the year, she tried to explain her difficulties to her supervisor but said she would always get pushback. She described one conversation she had with her supervisor:

> I think my numbers were low on the data, for not putting in enough infractions. And I said that's just not who I am as a teacher. And you told us to be who we are as teachers during the first week of orientation, but I feel like I'm—what I'm committed to as an educator isn't what's expected, you know? Is there a way that I can start doing that? And there was this pushback of, well you don't know how it's done then. Well, you just haven't had enough experience. You're a first-year teacher, you don't know what you're talking about kind of a thing.

Although she did not mind a "little bit of buzz, a little bit of chatter" in her classroom, she felt forced to comply with the school's system. She was reprimanded by the school for not giving out enough detentions and judged by other teachers for not being strict. Yet she felt that her students behaved well for her, especially over time as they developed relationships with her. Eventually,

she gave up trying to convince the school leadership. When she stopped arguing, she recalled that her supervisor commended her on her development. "And I thought after that—I'm getting this positive reinforcement for just biting my tongue," she said. "You just get to the point where you can't make certain things bend."

Over time, Ms. Larkin did find that she had more space to adapt the school's systems. "And it was tough, though, because I felt kind of trapped at the start, you know?" she explained. "But luckily as time went on, the administration trusting you as a teacher is important, right?" By gaining the trust of her supervisor, she was able to implement some of her own practices like not yelling at students and creatively altering some of the school's rules as Ms. Beckerman had done. For example, when asking students to SLANT for attention, she created a new SLANT where students wiggled their arms around before bringing their hands together. Had she not harbored such strong commitments to a different school model, she may have become an adaptor instead of a rejecter.

Ms. Armstrong and Ms. Larkin departed from Dream Academy at the end of the school year, both taking jobs outside of education. Although they received support and feedback throughout the year, they ultimately felt too great a distance between their conceptions of themselves and who they were asked to become. "I've really come to the point where this is who I am as a teacher," Ms. Larkin explained. "This is it. I know who I am. It's just not really going to be compatible." Similarly, Ms. Briggs, a teacher who left after only two months, described the job as "not a good fit" and faulted herself for being too idealistic. "I had to be somebody that I'm not, and that's a main reason why I actually did leave, actually," she reflected. She described herself as not naturally someone who liked to assert herself or discipline kids, and found the task of managing students annoying and frustrating. "Like I'm usually very bubbly and happy, and I

was just like a zombie, like what is this?" she said. "I was like appalled at what I was doing, you know what I mean? Like I was becoming someone I'm not, and I was—I don't know, just frustrated and unhappy."

Exit

Many teachers experience their first sense of failure in the classroom. Having excelled at school and achieved in previous jobs, new teachers find themselves unable to get their students to pay attention. Mr. Bradley attributed the school's high teacher turnover in part to teachers' feelings of ineffectiveness:

> You're standing up teaching a lesson and none of the kids are listening to you and you start to say, oh gosh, I've been successful at everything I've done in life. I'm really smart, you know, I was dean's list and this and that and so maybe this isn't for me. Maybe I'm just not cut out for this. The kids don't like me. You know, and you start to have just all these thoughts about – you start to question your effectiveness and how effective you can be and you really have to have a thick skin.

Teachers at Dream Academy had different reasons for their departure, including personal reasons unrelated to the school itself.[38] Yet, as Mr. Bradley pointed out, teachers also left because they did not feel successful, particularly around issues of classroom management (Torres, 2014a, 2014b).

Dream Academy's rallying cry for the year of my fieldwork was Making Dream Academy A Better Place to Work. The previous year, the school retained only 44% of its teachers, its lowest retention rate since the school started. Teacher turnover at traditional public schools is 15% compared to 24% at charter schools (Keigher, 2010). At no-excuses charter schools, turnover rates can be even higher. For example, in the Harlem Children's Zone Promise

[38]Urban schools serving low-income and minority students more generally face challenges in both attracting and retaining high-quality teachers (Ingersoll, 2001). Many factors contribute to teacher turnover, including student demographics, teacher demographics, teacher qualifications, and school working conditions (for a review, see Borman & Dowling, 2008).

Academies, nearly half the teachers did not return in 2005-2006 (Dobbie & Fryer, 2011a). No-excuses schools attract teachers who are at greater risk of leaving, such as younger teachers who have attended highly selective colleges and Teach for America teachers (DeAngelis & Presley, 2007; Donaldson & Johnson, 2010). On the other hand, no-excuses schools also provide many working conditions that increase teacher commitment and retention, such as collaborative and collegial relationships with teachers (Allensworth, Ponisciak, & Mazzeo, 2009; Weiss, 1999), mentoring by veteran teachers (Smith & Ingersoll, 2004), and supportive administrators (Boyd et al., 2011; Johnson & Birkeland, 2003).

High teacher turnover presents a number of problems for schools. First, school administrators invest a huge amount of time and energy into helping new teachers learn school systems. Second, a culture of turnover impacts students as teachers significantly improve in effectiveness during their first years of teaching (G. T. Henry, Fortner, & Bastian, 2012; Kane, Rockoff, & Staiger, 2008). Finally, high teacher turnover can affect the scalability of no-excuses schools. No-excuses school leaders have expressed concern over the limited pool of teachers and leaders who fit well with their organizations (Tuttle et al., 2013), and studies suggest that problems of high teacher attrition make it difficult to imagine widespread replication of the model (Yeh, 2013).

Dream Academy hired an outside consulting group to examine issues of teacher retention and morale during my fieldwork. From the perspective of the consulting group, schools should focus on retaining the top teachers in the school because they are much harder to replace than lower-performing teachers. The previous year, Dream Academy retained 75% of its top-rated teachers, 100% of A teachers and 67% of B teachers. They retained less than a third of C teachers and none of their D teachers. In the eyes of the consulting group, these results were not

bad. Yet, the question remains whether the C and D teachers can become A and B teachers, or whether the no-excuses model is too rigid to develop all teachers into effective teachers.

Ironically, the very systems that the school believes are critical to its success make it difficult for teachers like Ms. Armstrong and Ms. Larkin to find success. "We don't really deviate from the norm at all," argued Ms. Johnson. "I think we achieved a lot of results but I think there are students and teachers that are limited because of this." She described the school's approach to teaching as "cookie-cutter" and partly attributed high teacher turnover to this lack of autonomy over decision-making. "I think that's where a lot of people get frustrated because they went into teaching to be able to express themselves and be able to be creative and do their own thing and then everything is made to be one way." As Ingersoll (2003) argues, teachers desire autonomy, particularly over behavioral decisions. "My point is that decisions surrounding such issues as appearance, clothing, and demeanor lie at the heart of teachers' work and that teacher control—or lack of control—over the creation, content, and implementation of such rules is highly consequential," he argues (p. 215-216).

How might Dream Academy better socialize teachers to be effective? One solution is to hire teachers who are a better fit. The school does this to an extent in emphasizing mission fit and coachability. Yet, even though Dream Academy looks for mission fit, they do not hire many teachers with experience working with low-income, minority kids. Ms. Turner wonders whether Dream Academy's struggles with teacher turnover stem from hiring young teachers from elite schools who can make a lesson plan but do not know how to interact with urban kids. It may be difficult for no-excuses schools to find more experienced teachers, however, because novices are generally more coachable and willing and able to work long hours. Although Dream Academy

has made its salaries more competitive to attract teachers, its intense workload and prescriptive systems likely will continue to present obstacles to recruiting more experienced teachers.

A second solution is to give teachers more flexibility to adapt the system to their own styles. Teachers who are given more autonomy and influence over decision-making, particularly around behavioral issues, are less likely to leave their schools (Ingersoll, 2006; Torres, 2014a, 2014b). Besides giving teachers a greater sense of control, a more flexible system may also make it easier for teachers to adapt. Ms. Costello recognized the difficulty in trying to change teachers' individual styles. In her first year, Ms. Costello was told to watch one of the veteran teachers to learn how to manage a classroom, but their management styles were 180 degrees from each other. At the end of the day, she found her management style was 100% her own personality. "I think part of it is teachable but I think there's a part of it that kind of just comes a little bit naturally to some people," she reflected. "It's really hard to teach management to teachers who don't naturally have the authoritative personality." Asking a teacher who doesn't yell to yell, for example, is not likely to be effective. If someone asked her to yell, she would also be reluctant. Teachers must find a way to feel natural in teaching. If teachers were given less rigid models, they might be able to adapt them in a way congruent with their sense of themselves.

The difficulty, of course, is how to navigate the line between uniformity and discretion. Teachers may not be able to fit themselves into standards that are too rigid, but they also need guidance to become effective teachers. The success of Lemov's teaching taxonomy demonstrates the demand for a more standardized set of teaching tools in education; at the same time, the high teacher turnover rates in no-excuses schools reveals the perils of over-standardization. Like the best doctors, the best teachers do not tie themselves to protocol but use their intuitive sense to diagnose problems and come up with solutions (Timmermans & Berg, 2010). In the teaching

profession, this flexibility is even more critical as teachers seek to address multiple goals, including their students' academic, social, and personal development. The best teachers recognize and adjust to the different needs of their students; they do not take a one-size-fits-all approach. They are able to adapt the school's practices to fit their own styles and experiences, as well as meet the needs of individual students.

One recurring finding in studies of standardization in organizations is that flexible standards may actually work better than rigid standards (see Timmermans & Epstein, 2010). But flexible standards can be difficult to implement. In some ways, no-excuses schools represent a return to common school practices of a much earlier era when teachers occupied a dominant position in the classroom and schools imposed a more rigid order. Forty years ago, Lortie (1975) argued that the modern, more flexible classroom demands more of teachers: "It requires a greater imagination, a greater understanding, and a more fluid and adaptable technique. But whereas a simple technique for defining the situation was sufficient for the highly regimented school, a complicated technique is required for a school that tries to maintain a more flexible life" (p. 308-9). A question for no-excuses schools is whether they are willing and able to transition from a rigid system tailored to novice teachers to more flexible standards designed to support experienced teachers.

Organizational Socialization and Habitus

Most striking about the different teacher adaptation strategies is the degree to which they emphasize teacher fit. Despite the intensive coaching efforts of no-excuses schools, learning new habits proves challenging for new teachers. While teachers can learn to copy the styles and strategies of more effective peers, these imitators still struggle with appearing too mechanical. Teachers who feel like themselves when teaching—either because they have a natural fit with the

school's disciplinary style or adapt strategies to better fit their own styles and personalities—find more success at the school.

A current debate in cultural sociology is the extent to which the habitus is durable or open (Streib, 2014; Wacquant, 2006; Wade, 2011). Bourdieu argues that the habitus is durable and not easily altered; at the same time, he recognizes that the habitus is constantly affected by experiences and can be modified if not radically revised (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). In his later work, he writes of a "specific" habitus that individuals acquire through later experiences (Bourdieu, 2000). Other scholars have distinguished between "primary" habitus acquired in childhood and "secondary" habitus acquired in adulthood (Wacquant, 2006; Wade, 2011; Wainwright, Williams, & Turner, 2006; Winchester, 2008). My findings lean in the direction of the durability of the habitus though I also find some malleability. Teachers find that it is not easy—but also not impossible—to learn new ways of speaking, standing, and interacting. It is not clear to me whether these changes are deeply inscribed, or whether teachers are simply learning to act out a new role. Regardless, I find that even the ability to take on a new role is strongly shaped by personal dispositions. Even acting as a disciplinarian is a difficult task for teachers.

Finally, the example of Ms. Phelps suggests that commitment is an important moderator of an individual's ability to change. Ms. Phelps' firm commitment to becoming a tougher teacher, along with specific instruction, helped her do this, whereas Ms. Armstrong's ambivalence toward the school's disciplinary practices impeded her progress. At the same time that strong commitment can lead one to modify one's habitus, habitus also shapes commitment. Had Ms. Armstrong possessed a more authoritative style, she may have more quickly bought into the school's practices. Future studies should consider the role that habitus and commitment play

in organizational socialization. Following new teachers through their first years of teaching could help identify their different stages of development. How do teachers first view their role in school discipline? How and why do their strategies change over time? When, if ever, do they feel at ease in their roles?

This chapter extends literature on teacher socialization by emphasizing the importance of bodily fit—that is, the way the habitus shapes teachers' ability to adapt to their job. While I find that personal values continue to play a strong role in teacher socialization processes (Lortie, 1975), I also find that teaching practices must be consistent with teacher's embodied dispositions. The work of discipline is deeply embodied and teachers who do not feel at ease implementing the disciplinary system feel alienated from themselves and find it difficult to adapt. How teachers implemented school disciplinary practices not only influenced their own experiences and decisions to leave, but also the classroom culture. In the next chapter, I show how teachers' use of the disciplinary system relates to student resistance and respect. This final empirical chapter builds on the ideas introduced in this chapter on the importance of teacher authority in establishing a less rigid order.

CHAPTER 6: RESPECT AND RESISTANCE

"You are absolutely silent," Ms. Rivas instructed the eighth-grade class lined up in the hallway outside of her classroom. "I'm looking right now and I'm appalled at what I see. You should be on the second full square and you should be forward-facing and your hands should be at your side." The class, shuffling in from lunch, now worked itself into a straighter line. Since summer orientation, school leaders had emphasized the importance of classroom entry and exit procedures, and encouraged teachers to have students "do it again" until they met expectations. Today, the redo process was taking longer. "It is not that difficult," Ms. Rivas repeated to the students. "Don't be upset when you get a consequence because I'm giving you an opportunity to demonstrate self-control and fix your own behavior." Suddenly, a loud burp interrupted the silence, followed by reels of student laughter.

A small, Black girl standing in front rolled her eyes at me and let out a more muted burp. I could hear, but not identify, the sources of the other sounds—coughs, throats being cleared, more burping. Not hopeful that the class would fall in line, Ms. Rivas began sending individual students into class to begin silent, packet work. Now 15 minutes into class, nine students remained in the hallway. "Those of you who want to stay out here and act ridiculous, you can proceed to stand," Ms. Rivas lectured them. A boy tried to speak, but she quickly cut him off, "You need to keep your mouth shut. You are being treated like a baby just because you can't exhibit self-control." Two hands sprung into the air. "I didn't ask any questions, hands down." One of the students dropped his hand but kept his arm raised. "I said hands down." "It is down," he replied. "Arm down." In slow-motion, he dropped his arm to his side.

Dream Academy appeared orderly and had few fights, but students constantly were engaged in small acts of resistance. These small acts of defiance—burping, clearing throats,

dropping a hand but not an arm—reveal how students exercised their agency within a tightly circumscribed structure. As much as school administrators tried to curtail minor misbehaviors, students found plentiful ways to demonstrate their own agency—over 15,000 behavioral infractions were recorded over the school year, and many more went unrecorded.

In this chapter, I ask: How does the disciplinary system affect teacher authority and student resistance? In contrast to dominant scholarly explanations for student resistance, I draw from ideas of respect and authority to explain why students constantly defied school rules even as they appreciated the strictness of the school. First, I consider what it means for students to show and receive respect. Then I discuss how the school disciplinary system undermined teacher authority, provoking *reactive resistance*, *expressive resistance*, and *autonomous resistance*. Finally, I consider how teachers can earn students' respect. This chapter emphasizes the importance of teacher authority in effective school discipline. To create an order that is durable and welcomed, I argue that authoritarian schools must give way to authoritative teachers.

Why Students Resist School

Schools can reinforce existing inequalities by socializing students into particular values, attitudes, and skills (Freire, 1970; Giroux, 1983). Yet students are not passive actors in this process of social reproduction. Resistance theorists vividly show how working-class and minority students have their own agency to resist and modify school practices (Giroux, 1983; MacLeod, 1987; Willis, 1977).

Scholars have explained student resistance of socially marginalized groups in terms of differences in communication styles (Au & Mason, 1981; Hymes & Gumperz, 1972) or limited structural conditions for mobility (MacLeod, 1987; Ogbu, 2003; Willis, 1977). Sociocultural and sociolinguistic anthropologists have conducted careful analyses of face-to-face interactions in

classrooms to show how children who are not from mainstream backgrounds confront cultural and linguistic discontinuities (F. Erickson & Mohatt, 1982; Heath, 1983; Wilcox, 1982). Lacking familiarity with dominant ways of speaking, dressing, and interacting, these students can have their actions and intentions misinterpreted by teachers and administrators (K. L. Alexander et al., 1987; Dee, 2005; Roscigno & Ainsworth-Darnell, 1999). As misunderstandings multiply, children may come to unconsciously sense that school is not a place for them and actively resist school. Sociologists have proposed a different explanation for student resistance. These scholars argue that those who attribute working-class and minority student difficulties to miscommunications ignore the social, economic, and political contexts that produce these interactions (McDermott & Gospodinoff, 1981; Ogbu, 1981; Villegas, 1988). These scholars claim that students who misbehave may very well understand the interactional competencies required in a classroom, but intentionally disrupt classroom activity because they do not see the rewards to schooling. In his classic ethnography, Willis (1977) shows how a group of working-class lads rejected school values and resisted teacher authority, creating their own hypermasculine, working-class subculture. Ogbu (2003) has proposed a similar "oppositional culture" theory in reference to Black students in the United States. He argues that Black students resist school because their families and communities have not seen the returns to education because of slavery and discrimination. More recent work, however, challenges assumptions that minority or low-income students have different commitments to education than White or middle-class students (Ainsworth-Darnell & Downey, 1998; Harris, 2011; Tyson, 2002).

Instead of using these dominant explanations as a lens to study student resistance, I draw from Erickson's (1987) work on teacher authority. Erickson reconciles these two perspectives by showing how both cultural difference and low commitment can undermine students' trust in the

legitimacy of schools and teachers. "Assent to the exercise of authority involves trust that its exercise will be benign," Erickson writes. "This involves a leap of faith—trust in the legitimacy of the authority and in the good intentions of those exercising it, trust one's own identity will be maintained positively in relation to the authority, and trust that one's won interests will be advanced by compliance with the exercise of authority" (p. 344). Without this trust between students and teachers, Erickson argues that cultural boundaries can become cultural borders. In other words, student resistance—"withholding of assent"—increases when teachers and schools lose their legitimacy.

Recently, there has been greater research interest in the role of teacher authority in effective school discipline (Arum, 2003; Goodman, 2010; Pace & Hemmings, 2007). In his book, *Judging School Discipline*, Arum (2003) attributes the decline in teacher authority to legal challenges to schools that occurred in the student rights contestation period of the 1960s and 1970s. As a result of changing legislation, Arum argues that teachers became less likely to discipline students and students became less likely to accept discipline as legitimate. "For discipline to be effective, students must actually internalize school rules," Arum argues. "This internalization occurs much more readily when school discipline is equated with the legitimately exercised moral authority of school personnel" (p. 33). Analyzing a national sample of students, Arum (2003) found that school strictness was positively associated with academic achievement when it was perceived as fair. Discipline that was perceived as overly strict, however, was associated with negative academic outcomes and higher student resistance. Although some studies find that students in stricter schools behave better (DiPrete, Muller, & Shaeffer, 1981; Metz, 1979; Segal, 2008), the opposite may hold in cases where school discipline is not perceived as legitimate (Arum, 2003; Frederick Erickson, 1987). This suggests that an overly

strict disciplinary system such as the one used by no-excuses schools may work to increase resistance even as it establishes a basic level of order.

A Real School

Like school leaders, students made sense of the school's disciplinary practices through the counterfactual of the chaotic urban schools that they had experienced. "OK, the difference is like the behavior – the standards," explained Reggie, an eighth grader. "Cause I have friends that go to [a district public school] and they basically do whatever they want. They fight all the time and everything. You might get suspended but you always come back, and you do the same thing over and over again. And they don't do nothing." Eighth grader Alyssa came from what she described as one of the worst schools in the city. "It was called Hot Rod City," she told me. "The school was chaotic, out of control. We didn't learn anything every day." Like Reggie, she explained how teachers gave students suspensions but could not control student behavior. Every day, there were fights on the bus and in the hallways.

Students noted the difference in approach between a zero-tolerance[39] and a sweating-the-small-stuff approach. While their previous schools maintained order by issuing suspensions, Dream Academy focused on the details. Zayna, an eighth grader, noticed how teachers followed up on what they said. They did not just say "quiet hallways" but marched students up and down the stairs until they were perfectly silent:

> [In my previous school] if we run around and be wild going down the stairs, we just go to our classrooms. But if we do it here, we have to do it as many times before we get it right and our homework must be a certain way. Like, I remember, I'll be honest, I turned in sloppy homework … in this school and the other school. And when I turned in sloppy work at the [other school], teachers just like give me

[39]Beginning in the 1990s, urban schools embraced a zero-tolerance approach to school safety. Zero-tolerance policies mandate suspension or expulsion for violent offences and drug charges, but they have been applied to non-violent offences, such as smoking, disruption, and verbal threats (Zweifler & De Beers, 2002).

> a weird look and just collect it but the teachers here they'll, like, give you a zero for it or you'll just stay after lunch and redo it or something.

Although students universally complained about the school's strictness, they acknowledged that school rules set new norms for their behavior. "What would make this school different is that it's driving you to do your best and they use no excuses whatsoever and they put your behavior in check," asserted fifth grader Bryce. "They don't play games. It's not a joke."

By setting strict norms for behavior, Dream Academy allowed students to do what they were supposed to do in school: learn. "Once it gets through your brain that they are not playing around and that this is a real school that you can really learn from, it's easy for you to understand," added Bryce. In his eyes, Dream Academy was "a real school" because it was a place where students could learn, a stark contrast to the "zoo" of his previous school. In addition to establishing a basic level of order to make learning possible, Dream Academy also took efforts to ensure that students were focused on instruction, monitoring heads down on desks or off-task behaviors. In prior schools, students felt like they did not have to pay attention. If they did not feel like doing their work, they could finish it the next day. If they wanted to put a head down, no one would bother them.

Eighth grader Veronica gave an example of how she slacked off in music class because the teacher was not strict. When she got frustrated at not being able to do the violin fingering correctly, she got mad and shut down. To keep going, she needed the pressure. If the school didn't push them, "you're just going to be, like, oh, I don't know it, whatever, whatever." Veronica wanted to learn but she was unable to discipline herself. Even though she found school rules annoying and extreme, they also helped her to be successful. Lechelle, an eighth grader who had attended the school for a year and a half, reported trying to do her homework more, being less disrespectful to her classmates and teachers, and arriving to school on time. Her mom

had sent her to Dream Academy because she had not been improving her grades and behavior at her prior school. "I just had a bad attitude all the time so I used to get in trouble a lot," she explained.

Dream Academy's strictness communicated the message to students that this was a real school where learning could happen. Without rules, students recognized that the school might become a regular public school where students and teachers did not care. Students for the most part seemed to buy into the school's college preparatory mission. Classic resistance theories thus apply less in this context than in the traditional urban school where many teachers themselves have low expectations for student learning (Anyon, 1980; Bettie, 2003; Valenzuela, 1999). If students bought into the school's strictness and mission, why did they constantly defy school rules?

Respect as Reciprocal

To understand why students resist teacher expectations even as they buy into school goals, we need to consider the idea of respect. Scholars have argued that urban schools face a crisis of moral authority where teachers do not command respect (Hemmings, 2003; Metz, 1979). Students' racial and socioeconomic backgrounds provide students with different understandings of authority and respect, and thus shape how they interact with their teachers (Hemmings, 2003). Traditionally, teachers expect students to show them respect unless they squander it, while they do not expect to show respect until students earn it. At Dream Academy, I found that the expectations were reversed—students expected teachers to show them respect unless they squandered it, while they did not show respect to their teachers until their teachers had earned it.

Students subscribed to a reciprocal notion of respect (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 2000). "Sometimes [teachers] don't think we have feelings, that we want to be respected," explained eighth-grader Rebecca. "You have to give respect to get respect." July, a seventh-grader, explained how her mom taught her to respect her elders. At the same time, "you can't just let people disrespect you … and expect you to respect them back." Mat, a seventh grader, echoed this perspective. "You can't disrespect somebody then later think, oh cool—we're cool, right?" He explained how his dad has a friend who will disrespect him and then come back and act cool. "My dad says I want to punch him in the face, like, don't talk to me," he conveyed. "You disrespected me a couple minutes ago."

When students did not feel respected by their teachers, they felt justified in showing disrespect back. I once heard Ms. Wallace chide a class that had badly misbehaved for another teacher that they had to show respect even if they did not feel respected. Yet, even if students recognized what they ought to do, it was more difficult to follow through. When I asked eighth grader Tyrone what he should if a teacher gives him attitude (that is, speaks in a hostile/sarcastic way), he answered, "I think it should be sit there and take it, because there ain't no way, there ain't no way you're supposed to battle with a teacher because they're always going to win no matter what." But then, he added, "But half the kids around here don't do that and have to get … an attitude back." He explained how his mom taught him to not sit silently if someone disrespected him:

> Because I wasn't raised like that—I'm not raised to sit there—if somebody says something to me and I don't say anything back. I was taught that if somebody disrespected me that you've got to give respect to get respect. So if they're not going to respect me, I'm not going to respect you. And they think that calling their parent—they call your parent that you're going to be in trouble. I act this way because I was taught this way. It's not like I'm going to get in trouble for acting this way.

To prove his point, he told me how his mom came into school last year because one of his teachers was laying her hands on students, which was considered disrespectful. His mom cursed at his teacher, leading the school to call the police to restrain her. According to Tyrone, his mom is still serving probation for that incident.

I argue that we can only understand student resistance within the context of Dream Academy's no-excuses disciplinary system. In the next section, I describe ways in which the school's disciplinary system—its frequency of corrections, breadth of regulations, and specificity of demands—led students to feel disrespected. I then describe three forms of resistance that result from the school's disciplinary practices: reactive resistance, expressive resistance, and autonomous resistance.

Reactive Resistance

During my fieldwork, I frequently observed what I call *reactive resistance*, that is, a student acting out as a direct response to a teacher's action, in most cases, an act of discipline. In disciplining students, teachers did something that students considered disrespectful. In turn, students acted disrespectfully towards their teacher, as consistent with their belief in a reciprocal notion of respect. Because teachers constantly monitored student behavior, they had more opportunities to administer discipline in a way that students found disrespectful. The two most common forms of disrespect that students expressed in interviews were that their teachers got too personal with them or unfairly picked on them.

Getting too personal

Students argued that teachers got too personal. Examples of teachers' getting too personal included yelling, getting in a student's face, tapping or touching them, snapping fingers at them, and making sarcastic remarks. While students might have accepted these types of behaviors from

their family members, they expected their teachers to be more professional. “All right, these teachers be thinking they our parents,” eighth grader Shariece explained. “They holler at us and they get in our faces. That gets me mad.” Her friend added, “And they snap at us like we dogs.” She demonstrated, “They do this [snap], they be like [snap].” She complained that she got detention for telling her teacher, “You don’t come in somebody’s face and snap in their face, what is wrong with you?”

Why did teachers engage in these types of behaviors? For one, they did not interpret all of these behaviors as disrespectful. For example, teachers snapped to get students’ attention because it was a quick and nonverbal way to redirect students. But, as one teacher noted in an email sent to school staff of “Top Five Student Grievances,” students felt that snapping when done close to the face was considered disrespectful. Sarcasm was another example that I initially did not understand. During one class I observed, two students were jabbing at each other. The first said, “I’m tired of you,” to which the second replied, “Take a nap.” Another student started repeating, “take a nap,” and broke out in laughter. As student laughter increased, Ms. Johnson intervened. “Can we stop with the jokes? Unless you want to be a standup comedian—make sure you’re taking notes, you have plenty of material for a routine. No one wrote [in their career plans] they want to be standup comedian. I don’t see any of you producing now, don’t see anyone getting anywhere.” Shavelle, whom had told me earlier how students did not like when teachers were sarcastic, turned to me and said, “See? Sarcasm.”

School leaders were aware that teacher sarcasm contributed to a negative school environment and addressed this during one staff meeting. Ms. Williams emphasized to the teachers how she wanted them to increase their positive interactions with students. “I’m watching my tone and body language, I’m trying, it’s hard,” she confessed. “Saying, ‘you

weren't listening to what I said,' that's a negative interaction." She gave other examples of how teachers could be passive-aggressive. When asking a student to pick something up, a teacher might say, "Look on the floor, what do you see on the floor?" Or when a student asks a question, a teacher responds sarcastically, "What do you *think*?" instead of answering the question. While some of these examples may not appear disrespectful, they affected students. As eighth grader Jessenia put it, "Respect is like when you show people that you care or have an interest for something. Sometimes, like one of my teachers just be sarcastic like, that, that just hurts and hurts."

In a traditional school, students might be willing to overlook a teacher's occasional yelling or sarcasm and not feel a need to respond. At Dream Academy, students were less generous with their teachers because the school was unrelenting with their own behaviors. Students spoke about how the school expected them not to yell while their teachers yelled at them. They punished students for displaying an attitude, when teachers also lost their cool and spoke in an unprofessional way (for example, "Stop the smart ass comments"). While students acknowledged that teachers had good and bad days, they did not feel permitted to have bad days. "When we have our days, they don't even respect us and if we do something, it's like, okay, it's a detention," argued seventh-grader Camille.

Students felt like they were supposed to learn from their teachers. If they were expected to control their temper, then teachers should also be subject to this same expectation because they were older and more experienced. Camille explained how it was hard to listen to teachers tell them to use self-control, when the teachers themselves did not show self-control with students. As eighth grader Shariece put it, "What I don't get is when, all right, when a student

disrespects a teacher, it's a whole entire adventure problem but when the teacher disrespects the student, it goes straight to consequence."

Being picked on

A second reason why students reacted to their teachers was because they felt unfairly targeted or accused. Under a sweating the small stuff approach, teachers constantly remind students of behavioral expectations and give out consequences for breaking rules. Subjected to constant nagging for seemingly harmless behaviors, students can come to feel like teachers are picking on them or out to get them. "I think [teachers] just look for problems," eighth grader Davon asserted. "They walk down the hallways looking for problems. We could be the most silent class and then [the teacher will] just all the time be trying to find somebody that's talking."

Teachers themselves admitted that they were sometimes overly focused on catching misbehaviors. Ms. Anderson explained how the Catholic school she attended had rules but "didn't really push them." Here, it was natural to push rules because "you're always scanning; you never stop looking." She gave an example from earlier in the day:

> I'm sitting there, and I'm like, Why am I –I'm telling Grace to stop fanning herself, but it is 95 degrees in this classroom; why am I picking a fight over this? You know, it's, like, it's just—and I think that's kind of the double-edged sword of a no-excuses environment, is that it's pushing me to pick up on everything, and call out everything, and notice everything. Whereas, in some cases, logically, it's like, let me step back and think about this for a second. Why am I fighting this battle again? You know, and I think that that's one of the hardest parts, is walking that fine line.

Ms. Wasulik, who had taught for several years at another urban school before coming to Dream Academy, attributed students' reactivity to the school's disciplinary approach. She told me that she had never seen students so defensive and hypersensitive in her previous school. "I feel like I'm picking them to death," she said. "Like the ugly duckling." Teachers' intensive focus on the disciplinary means over the ends is an example of goal displacement: "Activities originally

conceived as instrumental are transmuted into ends in themselves. The original purposes are forgotten and ritualistic adherence to institutionally prescribed conduct becomes virtually obsessive" (Merton, 1938, p. 673).

By not granting students a minute to be off-task, teachers can aggravate the student and amplify the situation. Eighth grader Alexis recounted how she had gotten into an argument with another student at lunch because he did not say hello to her. When she brought it up to him in a joking manner, he got offended. As a result, she entered her next class upset. Admitting to a short temper, she tried to calm herself down by putting her head down on her desk but her teacher started "poking me, yelling my name." She explained:

> That's actually gonna make me want to snap on you even though you didn't do anything … If a child is just quiet, not messing with anybody and they're mad, like you should respect that 'cause I'm not disrupting your class, I'm just trying to sit down, trying to recollect myself. But yet you all come over here and mess with me and then get mad saying I'm disrupting your class when you just disrupted me trying to calm down. Because like when I'm mad, people know when I'm mad. You can just tell without looking at my face, you can just tell my body language. But yet these teachers just keep on pulling at you.

Instead of reading her body language and knowing to leave her alone, her teacher felt compelled to follow the school's rules of keeping all students attentive. I observed teachers refusing to allow students who claimed to have a headache leave their heads down, or prodding students to attention who looked blank-faced or gazed in the distance. Students, still developing self-control, can get so aggravated by their teachers' attentions that they finally explode. As eighth grader Davon complained, "Oh, my God, it just irks me. They like try to – it seems like they're trying to push you overboard. They want you to go to the extreme."

On top of being unfairly targeted, some students also experienced times when they were falsely accused. As I discussed in Chapter 4, teachers made mistakes when they corrected students, but they rarely changed students' consequences. In dismissing students' defenses,

teachers could turn a minor misbehavior into a confrontation. To make matters worse, teachers frequently elevated consequences when students argued with teachers, from a warning for talking out of turn, for example, to a detention for being disrespectful. As incidents such as these accumulate, students can lose their trust in the legitimacy of their teachers and school.

When students felt that they were being unfairly disciplined, they often told me that their teachers were racist. For example, during one class in which Mr. Purcell, a White teacher, had students, in lieu of watching movie, write out a full-page apology note for not behaving appropriately, a group of Black boys mumbled to me that their teacher was racist and asked me whether I could teach the class. On another occasion, a Black girl accused Mr. Henig, a White teacher, of being racist because she was assigned a detention for talking when other students were also talking. These students made sense of a discipline that did not make sense to them through the lens of their unfair treatment by White teachers. It is noteworthy that students made these comments about their teachers only during moments when their teachers seemed to be wrongly exercising their disciplinary power.

Once they lost their trust in the legitimacy of their teachers, some students gave up trying to follow the school's expectations. The school's demands were overwhelming, especially for students who did not feel supported by their teachers. When I asked eighth grader Felicia why some kids were always in trouble, she replied, "They probably feel like there's nobody out there, like, there's nobody that actually cares for them. Like every time a teacher says, 'we're here to help you,' the kids say, no, no, you're here to pressure me and make me feel terrible and you're just stressing me out throughout the day." Students who constantly were treated as bad kids ended up acting that way, creating a self-fulfilling prophecy (Merton, 1948). For these students, consequences were no longer effective. "Now they're gonna do something about it, like, show I

can be bad, I can really be bad … and they're going to be rebellious and they're going to say whatever," eighth grader Sydney explained. "They're gonna push their desk down, they're gonna say 'whoosh' and say, 'I'm out of here,' and just walk out of the class."

Expressive Resistance

A second type of resistance that students engage in is what I term *expressive resistance*. In this case, students defy school rules in an effort to express their personal identities. In his work on total institutions, Goffman found that prison inmates, mental asylum patients, and other individuals in tightly-controlled spaces created an "underlife" to express themselves and maintain a degree of autonomy. To do this, they constantly engaged in minor acts of resistance. As Goffman (1961) describes, "where enthusiasm is expected, there will be apathy; where loyalty, there will be disaffection; where attendance, absenteeism; where robustness, some kind of illness; where deeds are to be done, varieties of inactivity … each in its way, a movement of liberty" (p. 304-305). I characterize these types of behaviors as expressive resistance.

No-excuses schools severely constrain students' "identity equipment" (Goffman, 1961), objects that students may use for pleasure. For example, Dream Academy stipulates students' dress down to the color of their socks; forbids distracting items like cell phones, jewelry, watches, and backpacks; and limits students' movements and ability to talk in the hallways. School administrators defend this dress code as helping students focus their efforts on being scholars, rather than getting distracted by jingling bracelets or personal clothing choices. Yet students questioned the degree to which their clothing choices distracted from their learning. During one class, I saw a student pulling up her pants to reveal black and white argyle knee-high socks. She challenged her teacher, "If you can't see them, why do you care?" Later when I asked her whether the school's rules helped students learn by keeping the classroom orderly, she

responded, “What color socks you wear doesn’t affect your learning.” Eighth grader Jasmine made a similar case about jewelry. “Well, I think that the whole bracelet rule is retarded because I don’t see how wearing bracelets will affect us or distract us or whatever the reason we can’t wear it,” she argued. I prodded, “You don’t think you’d play with it?” “I don’t ever play with my bracelets. It’s just there,” she replied. “Just wear it and leave it alone.” She explained how when she’s bored, she will write in her notebook, not play with her bracelets. These types of restrictions were viewed as unnecessary constraints on student freedoms that made the school seem prison-like.

Students frequently made analogies to the school as a prison or cage, a space where they did not have room to express themselves. “Like except in prison you have more freedom,” eighth grader Alexis argued. She pointed out how prison inmates at least get to do what they want when they go outside or eat lunch, but at school, teachers still expected silence during parts of gym and lunch. As I noted earlier, a former corrections officer who observed the school remarked on the similarities between student behaviors in school and in prison. Ms. Armstrong, whose classroom was observed by this woman, shared this conversation with me:

> She was observing me, observing seventh and eighth grade and when she had been observing me for like a few weeks, she was just, she told me that she could completely understand like and identify with the behavior the students were exhibiting in my class because that’s the behavior she sees everyday in prison inmates. And I remember that really hurt my feelings at the time. Like it really hurt my feelings and I was like, I’m not running a prison. I’m running a classroom. I want, I want my kids to be happy and to love it here and just the fact that like she could draw parallels based on 30 years of experience between prison inmates and seventh graders.

What this corrections officer observed and understood were these little acts of expressive resistance, an “underlife” students created for themselves to assert their agency.

What did this underlife look like? When a teacher's back was turned or a teacher did not enforce rules consistently, students quickly took advantage. They combed each other's hair, snuck into backpacks, tore up papers, took off their shoes, displayed colorful socks, pretended to sit without being on the chair, leaned their chairs back on two legs, erased names off the infraction list on the board, and stealthily played games like passing a packaging air pillow around the room while avoiding the teacher's notice. Moreover, students became sticklers to the rules themselves. If a teacher put forth the expectation of no talking, students tapped on their desks or hummed. For some teachers, it became difficult to get students' attention for even a few minutes. "I still can't get two minutes of silence during independent work," Ms. Adams, a new, White, second-career teacher told her supervisor during their weekly meeting. She had written on the board a list of behaviors that should not be occurring during silent work time, as her supervisor had suggested: No talking, no tapping, no humming … "They're so specific," she said. She had set the timer on the board for ten minutes of silent work time but found that "they couldn't do it for 15 seconds."

Resistance in this case was not a reaction to a particular incident but came from a more general need for recognition and respect. Resistance became a way for students to express their own individuality and differentiate themselves from each other. "We need to be able to express ourselves," argued eighth grader Anthony. "We need to be able to show people how we are and how we feel inside, and like we don't all, we're not all the same. Each one of us is different and like some of us, like this year, we're trying to get away with a way to express ourselves." This, he explained, could be as simple as wearing different colored socks. Goffman argues that these minor behaviors do not challenge authority structures but provide individuals with a degree of autonomy. By resisting, students found small ways to express themselves while mostly keeping

out of trouble. At times, however, individual students or the collective group more forcefully defied teachers; I describe these types of behaviors in the next section on autonomous resistance.

Autonomous Resistance

A third type of resistance is what I term *autonomous resistance*. Autonomous resistance occurs when students defy authority in an effort to assert their agency. Although expressive resistance also relates to students' desire for autonomy, students who engage in autonomous resistance more directly challenge teacher authority and are highly visible at school. Incidents of collective autonomous resistance often occurred when teachers demanded that students redo basic procedures like entering the classroom or when students were encouraged by a student's standing up to a teacher. Autonomous resistance was outright defiance, a signal that students were not going to put up with the school's rules.

Most students "play it cool" (Goffman, 1961), maintaining a low profile until they can get out. Hazel, a Hispanic eighth grader, took this approach. One of the school's top students, she held a status band, a privilege earned for good behavior and grades. In her three years at the school, she reported accumulating only five detentions. She described the secret to staying out of trouble: "stay low and … like keep a serious face." She added, "Act innocent—that's like the tip." Although she generally followed directions, she explained how she knows how to break them in a way that does not draw attention to herself. Only once did she get her points taken away for talking. "But that time I was really mad 'cause I didn't talk," she explained. "I specifically remember, I did not open my mouth." She started to protest but decided not to push the issue. By backing down, she stayed low.

Some students, however, were less willing to defer to authority. Among these students were a group of popular and outspoken Black girls. Aniya, the leader of this group, stood out in

both stature and volume from the rest of her eighth-grade class. Unlike most students I spoke with, Aniya felt she could express herself in school: "Yeah, I have to. There's no, like, I can't, I got to. I'm going to. Like, you can't say I can't express myself. I'm going to express myself." Because she was not afraid to speak her mind, she got her in frequent entanglements with her teachers and was left back in seventh grade for her behavior. Yet her assertiveness also won her admiration from teachers and students alike. As she put it:

> I think the reason why like people look up to me 'cause I'm the type of person that just don't, I don't care what people think about me. I'm gonna be myself no matter what, like I was always like that, like I'm gonna do what I want to do if that's good for me, like I just never, I was never a follower.

Still, she viewed her assertiveness as not altogether positive. "But, I mean, one reason I'm a leader is 'cause I was bad, you know, the people look up to people that's always bad," Aniya told me. Her best friend Keke likewise learned that giving her opinion was the wrong thing to do in school. By the time Keke reached eighth grade, she found herself speaking out less frequently and avoiding detentions. "My mom just told me, just do what you got to do, then you won't have no problems," she related. "It's going to go by quicker and quicker. Then you're gonna be soon out of that situation." At the end of the year, she won the most improved student award. She reflected on her change in behavior over her middle school years:

> I used to fight back or whatever because I don't . . . like to be told what to do. I want to be the leader. But sometimes I need to let the teacher be the leader 'cause they're the ones here before me and they're the ones taught what they are now teaching me. I don't like the way some people talk to me. . . . I like getting the last word so I will always fight back and give my opinion when it's really not needed.

Keke understood her talking back as a way to assert herself and show leadership, yet over time, she learned to step back and let her teachers step forward.

Making choices for oneself demonstrates leadership. In a school where students are told constantly to follow, being a leader can mean going against the rules. As eighth grader Jessenia

explained, “Most of these kids that are here are like followers ‘cause like they don’t have a mind of their own because this school is like, it tells you what you’re supposed to do.” An exchange between a music teacher and her eighth-grade class illustrates this tension between being a leader and a follower.

“What the heck?” Ms. Thurmond, the Black music teacher, shouted fiercely, hitting her music stand. She had stopped midway through her practice with the violins to face Keon, the class jokester who now returned her glare timidly. “You don’t listen to what Ms. Thurmond says. What you’re doing is annoying.” The girls in front laughed at their teacher’s uncharacteristic display of anger. “You’re all followers,” Ms. Thurmond told them, dismissing their laughter. “We ain’t followers,” one girl protested. “I told my mom, everyone calling us followers,” a second chimed in. A third proposed a new idea, “We all followers, we follow directions.” Picking up on this, another student accused the teachers of being followers of the school head: “You all Mr. Taylor’s clones.”

Ms. Thurmond removed her cell phone and walked to the door. Now silent, the students waited to find out whose parent was being called. At the sound of Dre’s name, the students looked at each other in surprise.

“I was just laughing, not talking,” Dre protested.

“Yes, you were laughing,” Ms. Thurmond replied.

“Call my mom,” another student offered.

“Excuse me, don’t tell me what to do,” Ms. Thurmond responded.

“Or me,” said the student.

“Can I talk to you after class?”

“Yes.”

"It's like the center of class is over here," Ms. Thurmond lectured the class. "I'm the instructor."

"You calling us followers again?" another student called out.

At the end of class, a student threw Ms. Thurmond's sheet music in the air in what she described as an act of retaliation. Speaking with him alone in the corridor after class, she explained to him, "This is what I meant by followers." Reminding him that he had asked her to be his mentor, she told him, "It was childish, stupid. You're supposed to be a leader." After he apologized, she told him he needed to do more than that. "You will get people to focus. People will follow you," she told him. "You're not hurting me. You're hurting yourself. I have a job, an education, I'm not being hurt. Students don't hurt their teachers, you got a 50 in class, you hurt your grade."

While Ms. Thurmond was trying to teach students to be leaders, her efforts were hampered by a system in which students did not have much room for leadership. Taking offense at being called followers, the students saw themselves as being assertive by not following meaningless rules, distinguishing their own maturity from their teachers' childlike submission to the school's disciplinary system. Although students tended to play it low, in instances like this, they collectively united in showing autonomous resistance.

Earning Respect

The no-excuses disciplinary system increased student resistance by not giving students sufficient room to make mistakes, express themselves, and show leadership. It also undermined teacher authority, making it difficult for teachers to earn students' respect. In this last section, I focus on how some teachers managed to earn student respect under a system that was perceived as unfair and oppressive. Although establishing legitimacy was challenging, it was not

impossible. The best teachers found a way to balance a no-nonsense demeanor with a sense of caring, make learning relevant and accessible, and stick it out long enough to win students over to their side. By examining these teachers' actions, we can gain insight into what it takes to build teacher authority in urban schools.

Passing the Test

To gain respect, teachers first have to recognize that respect has to be earned. This was not always evident to the teachers, most of whom had attended middle-class schools where teacher authority was a given. In conversations in teachers' offices and lunch tables, teachers expressed surprise at how disrespectful students were to adults. Eighth grader Sydney explained what she perceived as her teachers' expectations from students:

> I'm your teacher, respect me now. I deserve it. I'm doing this for you … like when I say respect I mean like I'm not being rude … like show them like I understand that you're here for my education, that you chose to … be here and teach me what I am going to need for the rest of my life. Like they wanna know that you actually notice that's what they're doing and so respect, like, you're noticing what they are doing and you're going to treat them with the right kind of attitude.

Teachers felt like they deserved students' respect because they worked so hard to help them. Students, however, tested teachers, making their own evaluations of whether their teachers deserved their attention. Veronica, an eighth grader, explained how she gives the teacher a day before she makes a judgment, although she can usually tell what she can and cannot get away with by the teacher's first expression. "They're smart, like, they're not stupid," she said of her classmates. "And they see how you're acting."

Although students test teachers to see how much they can get away with, they do not really want to be left to their own devices. Students want teachers to pass the test and effectively manage a classroom. This was evident in the example of Ms. Armstrong who struggled

throughout the school year with discipline. Students described her as too nice. Even though she became angry at times, she was not "real serious" like Ms. Evans, the Black teacher across the hall. Students recognized that Ms. Armstrong did not strictly implement the school's consequence system, preferring to use less punitive consequences or alternative forms of discipline, such as asking a student to step outside the classroom. She also did not consistently put detentions into the school's computer system so students who were assigned detention in class were not written up to serve detention. "She needs higher expectations," said seventh grader Angela. "Like all the other teachers with their expectations, they can control the expectations. But she needs to have something … she needs to become like, I'm not saying that she's not serious but she needs to become more stern and more, I wouldn't say feisty, but more serious."

Students buy into the school regime and show disrespect for teachers who fail to put any effort into teaching them (Hemmings, 2003). For example, during one class in January, Ms. Armstrong tried to get students' attention, threatening the class with a homework detention if they did not stop talking. Students continued to talk, and then a humming sound intermittently started and stopped. Students started laughing and clapping, trying to figure out who was making the sound. "My head is about to explode," one student called out. "All right, stop. It's not funny. I'll buy you two cookies tomorrow if you stop." Another student also tried to intervene, putting out her arms and instructing students to be quiet so they could figure out who was making the noise. The students quieted down a bit but they started laughing again when the sound reemerged. "It's Jeremiah," someone accused. "It's not me," he protested. Another person called out Emmanuel, who lifted his head from the back desk with a confused face. Someone suggested that they all open their mouth. During this time, Ms. Armstrong stood in the front, with an angry

expression on her face. Once, she looked up at the clock. "I know if Ms. Wallace was here, you'd all stop, so just stop," one student pleaded. "All right stop, for real, it's not funny anymore, I'm trying to get my education and you're not making that happen," added another. At this point, Ms. Anderson entered the classroom, leading a student to comment, "They're all gonna shut up now." Like Ms. Armstrong, Ms. Anderson stood silently and looked at the students, but this time, they quickly quieted down. Then, softly, Ms. Armstrong said, "The whole class is coming in tomorrow to give me back the six minutes we just wasted. Lunch detention for everyone."

In this incident, students found themselves taking over the role of the teacher in trying to maintain order and return to learning. Ms. Armstrong's seeming inaction led students to blame her, not themselves, for their poor behavior. "It's not the students' fault, it's only your fault because you should take the responsibility to control the classroom and that's why you come to [this school], and that's why you have your degree in teaching, because you should know how to control kids," Anthony, an eighth grader, argued. "And not all kids behave good." In fact, Ms. Armstrong was trying to apply the school's strategies. Standing and waiting for students' attention is one of the *Teach Like a Champion* techniques and works effectively for teachers who have a fair amount of control over their classrooms. But teachers who use it effectively only wait for a few minutes at most. When Ms. Armstrong stood silently waiting, even students who tried to listen eventually grew impatient. "And then Ms. A just sitting around looking around at everybody, oh, well, she's not gonna do nothing 'cause she's not doing it 'cause she's just listening to the class," said seventh grader Angela. "You know, I might as well go ahead and turn around and talk to somebody else."

Passing the classroom management test is the first step to gaining student respect. This alone will not win students' respect but it appears to be prerequisite to earning respect in an

urban school. “Just keep your head up, like show them that, show them your aggressive side,” eighth grader Keke suggested as advice for a new teacher. “You gonna have to show them that you don’t do anything playing. Like it’s this or no way here, that’s what I would tell them.” After teachers won students’ initial respect, however, they also had to be able to connect with students.

Relating to Students

Ms. Wallace was by far the seventh- and eighth-grade students’ favorite teacher. Students admired her energy, engaging lessons, and positive attitude, but they most often emphasized how she listened to them and understood them. I asked her what she had done to foster this. She thought a minute, and then remembered how even in her first year of teaching, she would squat down, talk to students when they misbehaved, and pull them outside of the classroom. “I’d talk to them like I would talk to my friend, not like a kid,” she explained. “I’d tell them, I’m not talking to you like you’re a kid. Am I disrespecting you? Tell me if I’m disrespecting you because I want to know.” She tried “really, really hard” not to talk down to students because they were younger and less experienced. A troublemaker herself as a child, she believed her own experiences helped her understand why students acted out and what they might need from their teachers. “What would I have needed to really be invested?” she asks herself. “What would I have needed to feel cared about? What would I have needed to feel respected and have respect for myself and to want to have this interest and motivation?”

Corresponding with students through personal writing journals, Ms. Wallace began to get a glimpse at how much her students went through: being molested and bullied, keeping one’s homosexual desires secret, learning about a sister who was found dead in the trunk of a car. In their reflections on the process, a number of students commented on how journaling gave them a chance to share their story. “It lets you see what we go through and why we come to school mad,

upset or other things," one student wrote. "Also it show how many of us have experienced in our [lives] that has changed us since the last few years, months, weeks, days, minutes and seconds." When Ms. Wallace shared these stories with other teachers, they were surprised to learn how much their students went through. Caught up in managing behavior and raising test scores, teachers could easily forget that they were working with children in need of care and kindness.

One afternoon, I spoke with Anthony, an eighth grader who was noticeably upset. He felt that the school did not understand that students had other responsibilities. His most important priority was worrying about his sick grandfather, followed by school, work, and the afterschool program where he tutored. To earn money, he helped his grandfather's friend install carpets and floors, and helped his father load boxes in a warehouse. He also assisted his Spanish-speaking neighbors fill out job applications. Finally, he helped around the house, cooking for his brothers and cleaning so his mom did not feel stressed when she returned from work. Because of his responsibilities, he often did not begin his homework until 11 pm, completing it by flashlight under his covers at 1 or 2 am. He would thus arrive at school the next day too exhausted to focus. When I asked him whether he felt comfortable talking to any of his teachers about his struggles, he named only Ms. Wallace.

Ms. Wallace provides an interesting comparison to Ms. Armstrong. In fact, Ms. Armstrong saw herself as most like Ms. Wallace. Both women were young, White, and from middle-class backgrounds; both exuded energy and enthusiasm for their material. Like Ms. Wallace, Ms. Armstrong designed creative lessons and reached out to students on a personal level. Yet because Ms. Armstrong was unable to successfully discipline her students, she failed to win the same respect that Ms. Wallace received from her students. As eighth grader Jocelyn put it, "For a teacher to earn the kids' respect, in our class anyway, is basically just by respecting

them, and respecting who they are as people." By respect, Jocelyn meant that teachers listened to students and showed them that they cared. "But there's a point – like a line where you can't cross," added Jocelyn. That is, teachers also had to discipline students. Unlike Ms. Armstrong, Ms. Wallace had been very aggressive—even confrontational—with students in her first year, earning the initial respect she needed to be able to interact less formally with students without having them take advantage of her authority.

Mr. Romero, one of Ms. Wallace's former co-teachers, understood the need for teachers to be strict, then warm. A first-year teacher at the time, he used to observe how Ms. Wallace could stop classes for a minute and say, "All right, time out here, like what's going on? Or like what is the issue and like kind of just having a candid conversation with the students and having respect on both sides to say all right, you're getting us; we're getting you." In contrast, he felt neither comfortable nor capable of switching to a less formal register throughout the year. "And I think part of that was just like I don't know across the board if I had the respect of all the students," he explained. Now in his third year teaching at a different no-excuses school, he does feel like he can interact more casually with students at times because he has already established a reputation for being very strict.

One challenge of the no-excuses model is balancing strictness with warmth. New teachers often come to believe a no-excuses school is about strict discipline. Ms. Brand, for example, sympathized with students' need to express themselves and get things out, but she understood her job as enforcing discipline: "The school pays you to stop those behaviors or to prevent them." Afraid of making their classrooms too loud or disorderly, teachers often refrained from joking around, telling students about their personal lives, or letting students engage in extended discussions of the material. This made it more difficult for teachers to relate to students

and develop relationships with them. Teachers found it easier to develop relationships with students outside of school, such as in after-school tutoring and on field trips. In his seven years of teaching, Mr. McCudden felt like it had never taken him so long to get students on his side.

Yet teachers' efforts to enforce rules often backfire when they focus exclusively on the rules. Sydney, an eighth grader, explained how it was not easy for students to relate to their teachers because they were so strict in class:

> 'Cause some teachers, in class, you're like, you're so strict, I don't want to talk to you. . . . I like fun people. So like in class, like the teachers always seem like the bad person and the criminal in our mind. It's not that easy to relate to the teachers or wanna talk to them at school. Like some teachers are really cool after school but in class [the students are] like, you're a psycho and I don't want to be near you after school so please do not come to my house, do not tell me to call you, do not do anything.

When students are frustrated with their teachers, they are more likely to resist, producing a vicious cycle in which teachers become stricter and students resist more. Teachers are more successful when they are able to establish a strong sense of connection with and respect for their students (Marzano, 2003; McFarland, 2001).

Breaking it Down

I focus in this dissertation on school discipline, and found it to be a central part of the experiences of students, teachers, and staff in the school. Yet, some might argue that teachers earn students' respect because they are masters of course content and delivery, not because they can manage students and relate to them. Classroom management problems are at least in part the result of students not being engaged in their lessons (Marzano, 2003). I indeed found that the school's most respected teachers were also effective teachers of course material, but teachers could only deliver an engaging lesson plan if they had already earned students' respect from being strict. Ms. Armstrong was known to create strong lesson plans, but she did not win

students' attention.[40] On the other hand, one new teacher who left the school by Thanksgiving faced even greater struggles with behavior because she lacked content knowledge. Having returned to teaching as a second career, she soon recognized that being able to do math was quite different from being able to teach math.

That said, I argue that clear, explicit teaching is the third leg of the respect triangle. I found that successful teachers scripted the moves in a pedagogical sense. That is, they broke down the lesson into a step-by-step process. Mr. Romero remembered the care and specificity of Ms. Wallace's directions in teaching students how to set up their notebooks the first week of class. At the time, he was surprised that things needed to be broken down into such basic steps, but he has come to see this as good teaching across the board. "It's just being very clear and erring on the side of extra clear," he found. "Needing to be very step-by-step and explaining things—those were transitions for me, and kind of a new skill set that I had to learn." In his current school, he now finds himself in Ms. Wallace's position. Last year, he had a co-teacher who wanted to be less structured and more conversational with students. "And, you know, you find that there's a good chunk of kids that are totally capable of that," he commented. "And then there's some other kids who really, you know, you hear the phrase a lot – 'oh, we can't handle that right now.'"

Educational scholar Lisa Delpit (1988) has argued that process-oriented literacy approaches can neglect teaching Black kids the basic skills that children from other cultural backgrounds learn at home. She gives an example of a Black student who became frustrated with his college writing professor who asked students to write and peer-edit each other's essays in

[40]It is possible that an engaging teacher might have an easier time with classroom management in a different school setting. Teachers at Dream Academy, however, had less room to experiment with either pedagogical or behavioral strategies.

class. The student felt the teacher was not teaching them anything. "If such explicitness is not provided to students, what it feels like to people who are old enough to judge is that there are secrets being kept, that time is being wasted, that the teacher is abdicating his or her duty to teach," Delpit argues (p. 287). A skills-based approach that makes explicit the steps needed to write an essay or multiply a fraction does not preclude higher-level thinking or student-centered activities, Delpit argues; both approaches are necessary.

Those teachers able to balance a more progressive, student-centered learning approach with a more traditional scripted approach seemed best able to help students learn. Ms. Wallace's classes were interesting and fun. She had students write letters to the local newspaper editor about what they wanted to change about their city; she incorporated short activities and competitions into her lessons; and she pushed students to discuss and participate. Students loved to share about the time that Ms. Wallace dressed up in a cape, turned out the nights, lit a candle, and told the class she had a secret in an envelope, which turned out to be the thesis statement. I observed version 2 of the secret:

> Then she walks from the back of the room with a large flashlight on, shining it in people's faces and holding a long green candle, which is lit. She has a black hooded sweatshirt pulled over her head. "This year, the secret is even more secret, shhh," she says, her volume increasing. "The secret is going to take you from the little 7th graders you were to … the advanced 8th graders you are … into advanced writers!" "Open your secret! Open your envelope!" "Oh my god," I hear a student murmur. "Oh yeah," Ms. W says, undeterred. Inside the white envelope is a sheet of paper with "The SECRET formula—ADVANCED" across the top, and then steps for each of six paragraphs on how to write a persuasive essay. She tells them it seems like a lot but they will do this by the end of the semester. The class transitions well from this activity to being silent after she says, "Now that you have the secret in front of you, the extra comments stop." She does a "turn and talk" and students' attention returns quickly.

Ms. Wallace gave students opportunities to write and peer-edit each other's papers but she also broke down the writing process into concrete steps with formulaic openings and outlines that

proved useful to students in composing essays. For example, she gave students three "hooks" to choose to begin a persuasive essay: an insightful question, a mini story/scenario ("think of a time when," "imagine," "pretend," "picture this"), or a reflection. With these tools in hand, students could compose imaginative openings. I observed this same balance between explicitness and engagement among the school's two best math teachers: they taught and reviewed problems in a very systematic way, but also incorporated chants, competitions, and group work to help students learn concepts.

Teachers like Ms. Wallace who earned students' respect did not need to monitor students so tightly because students more willingly followed their directions. For example, at the start of one of Ms. Wallace's classes, I wrote in my fieldnotes, "She puts the Do Now and timer on the board, and instructs the students to do it. Doesn't try to get their attention, issue any discipline. 5 minutes on Do Now, it's quiet. Students who enter from another advisory enter quietly." After the class, I noted how discipline was not an issue in the class and Ms. Wallace did little to address it except for calling out a few students during the dismissal. Yet Ms. Wallace's very exceptionalism demonstrates how difficult it is for the majority of teachers to earn—and maintain—students' respect. While Dream Academy's strict disciplinary system helped teachers like Ms. Phelps pass the initial disciplinary test (Chapter 4), it also impeded teachers' abilities to establish positive relationships with students. It was easier for teachers to lose students' respect than to gain it.

Discussion

An orderly school is not one without disorder. The opposite, in fact, may hold. Schools that exert tight control over students may actually increase minor acts of resistance if their rules are perceived as unfair (Arum, 2003). I found that the school's pervasive monitoring of student

behavior incited students to react (*reactive resistance*), require an outlet for expression (*expressive resistance*), and act out as a way to assert their own autonomy (*autonomous resistance*). As one student put it, "The students sometimes have much more bigger reasons to talk back or fight back with a teacher than in my other school. Because in my other school, they would just do it for the fun of it. But here, we pretty much have a reason for it."

Studies of student resistance in schools have focused on individual student characteristics to explain student defiance, in particular, the racial and social class background of students (Fordham & Ogbu, 1986; Willis, 1977). These scholars argue that minority and working-class students defy teacher authority because they lack familiarity with school expectations (Au & Mason, 1981; Heath, 1983) or sense that success in school will not provide them with future benefits (MacLeod, 1987; Ogbu, 2003; Willis, 1977). To understand student defiance, I argue, we need to attend to both student characteristics *and* school structures (McFarland, 2001). On the one hand, students' race and social class influenced how they interpreted their teachers' behaviors and how they understood respect. But the school's sweating-the-small-stuff disciplinary system, with its constant monitoring of seemingly insignificant behaviors, turned a cultural difference into a source of resistance (Erickson, 1987). As students came to perceive their teachers as unfair and out to get them, they withdrew their trust in the school and their teachers. Not feeling respected by their teachers, they felt compelled to show disrespect back.

For no-excuses schools, we find a tradeoff. The sweating-the-small-stuff approach establishes order and sets new norms for students who are often accustomed to doing what they want at school. At the same time, a disciplinary system that is perceived as unfair can undermine teacher authority (Goodman et al., 2011), reduce student commitment (Metz, 1979), and increase resistance (Arum, 2003). Ms. Wallace provides an example of a successful teacher who exudes

both warmth and strictness, but many other teachers at Dream Academy struggled. To reduce student resistance, teachers must demonstrate that they are tough, can relate to students, and know how to make learning relevant and accessible. In other words, successful teachers must find ways to command authority themselves. A teacher who exerts power may gain compliance through threats and sanctions, but one who has authority largely depends on students' willingness to submit (Weber, 1958). Teacher authority is thus the most effective form of discipline because it replaces coercion with consent (Arum, 2003; Goodman, 2010; Metz, 1979). In the Conclusion, I will argue that authoritarian schools must give way to authoritative teachers to create an order that is durable and welcomed.

CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION

In the last decade, a new type of urban school has emerged. It is one characterized by high levels of discipline and structure, matched by exceptional levels of student achievement. These "no-excuses" charter schools like KIPP, Achievement First, Uncommon Schools, Success Academies, Mastery, Aspire, and YES Prep are hailed as one of the most promising new urban school reforms, garnering hundreds of millions in financial support for their success in narrowing, and even closing, racial achievement gaps (Abdulkadiroglu et al., 2009; Angrist et al., 2011; Dobbie & Fryer, 2011a, 2011b). Both the public and private sectors have focused on replicating these "gap-closing" schools (S. F. Wilson, 2008) as a large-scale education reform strategy.

Yet, coupled with their success has emerged growing concern over their disciplinary practices (Ben-Porath, 2013; Ellison, 2012; Goodman, 2013; Lack, 2009; Macey, Decker, & Eckes, 2009). No-excuses schools use a highly structured, school-wide disciplinary approach that has been characterized as paternalistic (Whitman, 2008), militaristic (Lack, 2009), and racist (White, 2015). Critics worry that a tightly controlled, rule-bound behavioral system has negative consequences for students' self-esteem, identity, and ability to succeed in less structured environments (Ben-Porath, 2013; Ellison, 2012; Goodman, 2013; Lack, 2009). Illustrating the growing backlash, recent articles on no-excuses schools include the following titles: "How No-Excuses Schools Deepen Race, Class Divisions" (Ravitch, 2013b), "Why 'No Excuses' Charter Schools Mold 'Very Submissive' Students—Starting in Kindergarten" (Strauss, 2014), and "How Strict Is Too Strict? The Backlash Against No-Excuses Discipline in High School" (Carr, 2014). Despite this rising concern, however, few empirical studies have been conducted inside these schools because they are difficult to access.

In this dissertation, I examined the everyday experiences of students, teachers, and administrators inside one no-excuses school. Drawing from 15 months of fieldwork inside Dream Academy between 2012 and 2013, I explored the costs and benefits of the school's disciplinary system, showing how students, teachers, and administrators themselves experience and understand the school's disciplinary practices. I structure the dissertation around four primary research questions: 1) Why did school administrators adopt the disciplinary system? 2) What skills do students learn from the school's disciplinary system? 3) How do teachers adapt to the disciplinary system? 4) How does the disciplinary system affect teacher authority and student resistance? Instead of summarizing the argument of each chapter, I will here weave together the key insights that I learned on social class and control. Then, I will identify the major contributions and limitations of the dissertation, and discuss implications for policy, practice, and research.

My interest in no-excuses disciplinary practices comes from a sociological interest in how school structures reproduce or alleviate inequalities. By studying a strict disciplinary form, I sought to gain insights into how a more structured school environment might benefit or disadvantage working-class students. I found that the most important benefit of the school's strict system was establishing a minimum level of control necessary for teaching and learning to occur. School leaders found that they needed to be more prescriptive in setting structures for their students to succeed; for various reasons, there were sufficient students who did not share school norms to significantly disrupt the learning experience for all students. A more flexible approach did not work—what worked was a highly regimented, sweating-the-small-stuff system. School leaders learned this by copying what worked, not conceptualizing what should work.

Yet, consistent with prior research, I found that the tightly controlled disciplinary system had a number of negative consequences for students, reinforcing existing inequalities in social and behavioral skills. What worked for order did not work for developing in students the skills to navigate more flexible settings like college. Unlike their middle-class counterparts, Dream Academy students were not encouraged to take initiative, be assertive, and negotiate with authority, but to monitor themselves, follow rules, and defer to authority. Furthermore, I found that what worked to keep order also did not appear to work for increasing student commitment. Although students appreciated the school's strictness, they found the school's frequent corrections, specificity of demands, and breadth of regulations unfair. Questioning the legitimacy of teacher authority and school rules, students constantly engaged in minor acts of resistance, accumulating over 15,000 behavioral infractions during the school year.

Do these findings point to an irresolvable tension? Must urban schools choose a highly structured disciplinary system at the expense of student engagement and development, or a less structured system at the risk of school disorder? Are these "contradictions of control" (McNeil, 1986) inevitable? I argue that schools do not need to compromise either of these goals if they can establish teacher authority. Through my fieldwork, I found that teachers who had an authoritative presence were able to moderate the strict disciplinary systems. Not reliant on the school system to establish control, these teachers were able to balance a strict demeanor with a softer side, earning the trust and respect of students. Although school leaders believed that a highly scripted approach was what worked for urban students, in practice, I found that what worked better was teachers' ability to reduce the need for authoritarian structures by commanding moral authority. It was teachers like Ms. Wallace that created an order that was durable and welcomed.

Contributions

This dissertation makes three important sociological contributions. First, I fill a gap by studying a new form of social control and socialization. A long-standing tradition in the sociology of education has focused on schools as socializing institutions that tacitly shape the behaviors of students (Dreeben, 1968; Durkheim, 1973; Parsons, 1959). In addition to academic instruction, schools have a hidden curriculum by which they transmit cultural values and behaviors to students through the structure of daily routines and social relations (Bowles & Gintis, 1976; Giroux, 1983). While earlier research emphasized how schools socialized students to participate in society by teaching them norms like independence and achievement (Dreeben, 1968), later research focused primarily on the role of schools in reproducing racial, class, and gender inequalities (Anyon, 1980; Bowles & Gintis, 1976). As sociologists of education have shifted towards quantitative, individual-level analyses, however, there has been a dearth of research on school discipline or the organizational features of schools (see Arum, 2003). By studying a prominent and controversial new form of urban school discipline, I bring renewed attention to the role of school structures in promoting and impeding opportunity for disadvantaged students. I argue that even in a school promoting social mobility, teachers still reinforce class-based skills and behaviors. Because of these schools' emphasis on order as a prerequisite to raising test scores, teachers stress behaviors that undermine success for middle-class children. I show how school efforts to promote mobility by socializing students into middle-class norms paradoxically reinforced working-class norms.

Second, this study updates Bowles and Gintis (1976) for a post-industrial society to reveal a more complex process of socialization. Instead of producing workers to sustain industrial capitalism, I argue that schools produce worker-learners to close the achievement gap.

Bowles and Gintis, tracing the development of mass public education in the United States in the mid-nineteenth century, argued that schools socialized working-class students into norms of conformity, discipline, and punctuality to create a docile workforce. My findings echo theirs, but also reveal important differences. While Bowles and Gintis argued that teachers prepared working-class students for working-class jobs because of their low expectations for their students' futures, I found that teachers' high expectations for their students' futures motivated them to emphasize behavioral control. In emphasizing working-class behavioral norms, school leaders seek to create an orderly environment to raise student test scores and promote social mobility. The teaching of working-class skills, therefore, is not seen as a pathway to the factory, but as a gateway to college and the middle class.

Third, I argue that educational debates over freedom and strictness obscure the far more important issue of teacher authority. A long tradition in the study of education has focused on how much structure is beneficial or harmful for disadvantaged students, with some scholars suggesting that low-income, minority students may benefit from greater control (Bernstein, 1971; Delpit, 1988; Hirsch, 1996; Whitman, 2008). Although I went into the field to study authoritarian schools, with the aim of contributing to these debates, I came out studying authoritative teachers. I found that teachers who earned the respect and trust of their students were able to establish an order that did not impinge so heavily on students' autonomy, suggesting a possibility for resolving these tensions between structure and freedom. Extending recent work on teacher authority (Arum, 2003; Goodman, 2010; Goodman et al., 2011), I show how teacher authority depends on the embodied and contextual knowledge of teachers. Teachers who feel at ease being aggressive yet show discretion based on their understanding of classroom situations and individual students found it easier to earn student respect.

Limitations

As my first ethnographic study of a school, this dissertation has its limitations, both those I recognized in advance and those I only became aware of after completing my fieldwork. Here I address three key limitations to provide context for the study and to assist future researchers who may choose to undertake a similar type of project.

I choose to do a single case study because ethnographers typically spend over a year in a single field site to get to more intimately know the people and place. I found it took a significant amount of time to figure out what was going on at Dream Academy and I could have benefitted from even another year in the school. School routines quickly became familiar, but getting to know teachers and students and the factors that shape their experiences was a more involved process that required immersing myself in the school for a sustained period of time. One limitation of a single case is that each school has its own particularities. While Dream Academy closely follows no-excuses practices, one key difference between Dream Academy and other no-excuses schools is its very low suspension rates. I thus could not address the causes and consequences of high suspension rates in no-excuses schools, an issue that has received significant attention in recent months (Decker & Darville, 2015).

A comparison case might permit some isolating of the "effect" of the no-excuses disciplinary system on students, teachers, and administrators. Although I gave this some consideration before I began my study, I did not find it feasible to compare students who were admitted to Dream Academy to those who were not admitted because these students attended multiple schools. Moreover, comparing students at Dream Academy with unsuccessful applicants is not a fair comparison because the latter students are in school with other students who did not apply to the lottery. Their experiences will be strongly influenced by their peers, whom are qualitatively different than students from families who had the information and desire

to apply to Dream Academy. In addition, much more differs between these students' schools than their disciplinary systems, including their teachers, leadership, school hours, and curriculum.

What I have tried to do instead in these chapters is demonstrate that Dream Academy has a distinct disciplinary environment that shapes the experiences of those in the school. To show its distinctiveness, I draw from research on urban school discipline; reports on prior school experiences of students, teachers, and administrators; school behavioral records; and my own observations of school discipline.[41] To show its impact, I link acts of student resistance or student submission to specific features of the disciplinary system, triangulating these with teachers' own admission of being overly picky or not having time to get to know students. I also make use of the variation I did observe between effective and ineffective teachers, or between well-behaved and misbehaving students. Finally, I did not simply take students at their word, but provided counter-examples to challenge their statements based on what I had observed in their classes.

A second limitation of this study is its lack of sustained attention to matters of race. This is an artifact of my own theoretical interest in social class and control. In addition, race was largely absent from explicit classroom discussion or teacher conversation, so it did not surface much in my fieldnotes. However, scholars have argued that the new racism is less visible and appears in coded racialized language (Bonilla-Silva, 2010). Talk of "middle class" skills or "urban" students, language I often heard, is a reference to White norms and Black kids. In retrospect, I should have attended more to the role of race in shaping student-teacher interactions. While I observed differences in infractions by race and gender, confirmed by the quantitative

[41]I also did short observations in a highly selective boarding school, the district high school, three other no-excuses schools, and a progressive urban school to ensure that what I was observing was representative of a no-excuses culture and distinct from other school cultures.

data, I did not interrogate what these differences meant to students or teachers, or how students perceived being disciplined from mostly White teachers. How discipline shapes students' perceptions of race and racism would be an interesting topic to explore in future work (see White, 2015).

A third limitation of this dissertation is that it focuses on teacher socialization over peer socialization. Peer cultures are an integral part of student life (Coleman, 1961), and the relationship between peer socialization and formal school socialization goals is understudied. The rigid school context, however, made it very difficult to access peer culture, especially in my position as a teacher's assistant/observer. I recognized this when I observed in the local public school and found plentiful time to chat with students and observe them chatting with each other. As it was, I only observed students informally during lunch and group or partner work, insufficient time to gain a fuller understanding of peer cultures without a primary informant to help me make sense of what I was hearing. While I made efforts to get to know individual students through tutoring, I never got close enough to any particular student. One strength of this dissertation is that I present the perspectives of administrators, teachers, and students. But, in trying to get a broad view of school dynamics, I did not have sufficient time to closely follow any one group. Interestingly, the limitations I faced as a researcher in accessing peer cultures reflect some of the difficulty that teachers and students face in trying to build relationships. One of the unintended consequences of a highly structured disciplinary system is that it does not provide teachers and students with the unstructured space and time to build trust and get to know one another.

Implications for Policy and Practice

In November 2015, Eva Moskowitz, CEO of Success Academies, New York City's largest network of charter schools, wrote an editorial in the *Wall Street Journal* defending her schools' controversial no-excuses disciplinary practices. "People have understandably expressed concern that some students may have particular trouble meeting our behavioral expectations and ask why we can't simply relax them," she wrote. "The answer is that Success Academy's 34 principals and I deeply believe that if we lessened our standards for student comportment, the education of the 11,000 children in our schools would profoundly suffer" (Moskowitz, 2015). Despite growing public concern— a recent *New York Times* article on Success Academies' disciplinary practices generated over 2000 comments within 24 hours (Taylor, 2016)— Moskowitz continues to defend no-excuses disciplinary practices as necessary for the success of her students. Although a few no-excuses schools are making shifts in how they implement school discipline, a rigid, rule-bound still characterizes most no-excuses schools.

Is the no-excuses model a package deal? Can we disentangle a single thread of no-excuses schools, or do all their minor practices and procedures add up to a successful school model? From one angle, we can see the no-excuses disciplinary system embedded in broader theories of action that prioritize order, efficiency, and achievement, and rely on teacher-directed instruction and frequent student testing (Goodman, 2013; Lake et al., 2012). With a laser focus on raising student test scores and getting all students to college, these schools show little tolerance for disruptions. At the same time, I argue that policymakers and educators need to question the assumption that the no-excuses model is a black box that cannot be unpacked. In fact, no-excuses schools share several common features and practices that might explain their success, including increased instructional time, strong leadership, enthusiastic and highly-educated teachers, data-driven instruction, and a college-going culture (Dobbie & Fryer, 2011b;

S. F. Wilson, 2008). I found that the disciplinary system established a basic level of order necessary for learning, but this does not preclude the possibility that there may be better ways to attain this order.

For starters, I suggest that no-excuses schools may be able to modify their disciplinary practices without a decline in achievement. KIPP schools have taken a lead in implementing character education and several no-excuses schools in Indiana, Denver, New Orleans, Philadelphia, and San Francisco are beginning to use alternative, research-based approaches to discipline such as Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) and restorative justice (Disare, 2016; Green, 2016; Zappa, 2015). In 2009, Ric Zappa, Head of Schools and Character Development for KIPP Bay Area Schools, began implementing restorative justice practices at KIPP Summit because he did not find the no-excuses approach effective in changing student behavior. Restorative justice practices changed the school's approach from automatically punishing students to working together with them to resolve problems and restore relationships. "Almost immediately, we began seeing results—fewer students were sent out of class, and students' reading levels and academic performance improved exponentially," he writes in a KIPP blog (Zappa, 2015). "Our KIPPsters felt more in control of their day-to-day lives by taking ownership of their education and setting goals for themselves. A partnership between students and teachers emerged." Moreover, the school was able to significantly modify its disciplinary approach without compromising academic achievement. KIPP Summit was named a California Distinguished School in 2011 and a National Blue Ribbon School in 2014. In the 2014-15 school year, all KIPP Bay Area schools began piloting restorative justice.

Restorative justice is a very different approach from sweating the small stuff, but other disciplinary programs might require schools to make fewer changes. In a paper I wrote with a

colleague, we compare Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) with no-excuses discipline (Golann & Torres, 2016). These two approaches share many common features, including a school-wide approach to behavior, the use of rewards and consequences, and an emphasis on clear expectations. Unlike the no-excuses approach, however, PBIS is supported by a large and growing body of empirical research (Sugai & Horner, 2002). Moreover, the PBIS framework directly addresses some of the key weaknesses of the no-excuses disciplinary system, such as its overly harsh consequences and one-size-fits-all approach. By focusing on positive consequences, individualizing plans for students who display significant behavioral problems, and requiring the majority of teachers to agree on school rules, disciplinary frameworks like PBIS may be able to address some of the key challenges with no-excuses discipline.

While I think no-excuses schools should reconsider their disciplinary practices—even if this leads to a decline in achievement—my broader recommendation is for these schools (and all schools) to pay more attention to teacher authority. I found that teacher authority was the most effective form of school discipline (Arum, 2003; Goodman, 2013), yet discussions of teacher authority have largely been missing from the conversation about school order. Instead of asking, "What school structures establish order?" or "What school structures benefit disadvantaged students?" I propose that schools should instead ask, "What school structures support teacher authority?" School disciplinary systems are only systems, and are effective to the degree to which they support teacher authority. That said, systems that are too strict can undermine teacher legitimacy, while those that are too flexible may not support teachers in their efforts to maintain control. Restorative justice approaches that emphasize repairing relationships and strengthening the community may help to establish trust between students and teachers, a key factor in establishing teacher authority. PBIS, which minimizes the use of punitive consequences and

requires consequences to be proportionate to the offenses committed, may also be perceived by students as more fair than a sweating-the-small-stuff approach.

No-excuses schools could take additional steps to supporting teacher authority. Although no-excuses schools want their teachers to be warm/strict, I found that they did little to train teachers to strike this balance. Dedicating more professional development to helping teachers become warm/strict would be a step in the right direction. In addition, efforts to recruit and retain teachers of color (Achinstein, Ogawa, Sexton, & Freitas, 2010) who may feel more natural taking on a no-nonsense nurturer role may also be beneficial. Schools could also structure more opportunities like advisories and clubs for students and teachers to develop positive and trusting relationships, as well as more unstructured time where students and teachers can freely interact. Finally, granting teachers more autonomy and influence over decision-making may help reduce teacher turnover (Ingersoll, 2006; Torres, 2014a, 2014b). High turnover rates in no-excuses schools make it difficult for teachers to establish authority because they are not around long enough to develop relationships with students or gain a positive reputation. Instead of building a system that is oriented towards novice teachers, no-excuses schools may do better to develop teachers who can succeed without such a system.

Not all researchers take a position on the subjects they study. I did not begin my study of no-excuses schools with a particular ax to grind. But from my research, I came to recognize the costs of their disciplinary practices for students, teachers, and administrators. What I hope this study contributes to is the weakening of the rigid disciplinary practices used by these schools. If these practices no longer characterize no-excuses schools, I think the conversation can then turn to the features of these schools that are helping students succeed—things like frequent teacher feedback, data-driven instruction, individual tutoring, increased instructional time, and high

expectations (Dobbie & Fryer, 2011b). While these schools do not seem like a scalable solution to the problems of urban education (S. F. Wilson, 2008; Yeh, 2013), they may still have much to teach that may benefit the broader educational field.

Research-Practice Connections

In the last decade, there has been an upsurge of interest in fostering connections between research and practice. This new movement has introduced its own set of terms, including knowledge mobilization, knowledge transfer, research use, and evidence-based practice (Graham et al., 2006). In the United States (and in other countries, like the United Kingdom, France, and Australia), new initiatives and organizations have been developed to promote research use in education.[42] This interest in research-practice integration is a response to critiques launched in the late 1990s against educators for not drawing from research-based evidence, and against educational researchers, for not making their research relevant to practitioners and policymakers (Furlong & Oancea, 2005; Hargreaves, 1996).

Research use itself is complicated to define and measure. It has often been categorized into three types of use: instrumental use, conceptual use, and strategic use (Nutley, Davies, & Smith, 2000). *Instrumental use*, the direct application of research to policy or practice, is how we generally understand research use. A teacher, for example, learns about an effective, research-based practice to improve literacy and adopts this approach in the classroom. Instrumental use, however, is less common than *conceptual use*, the indirect ways that research shapes

[42]These include the What Works Clearinghouse and the DoingWhatWorks online resource, as well as emphases in *No Child Left Behind* and *Race to the Top* to increase the use of evidence-based practice in schools. On the research side, the Institute of Education Sciences has shifted its focus towards identifying what works. Most recently, the Spencer Foundation and the William T. Grant Foundation have developed new initiatives to make educational research relevant to practice and to study the influence of research on practice and policy, respectively.

policymakers' and practitioners' knowledge and attitudes. Ideas from research on the school-to-prison pipeline, for example, can shape how school leaders understand disciplinary problems or challenge existing ways of doing things. Finally, a third approach is the *strategic or tactical use* of research. Policymakers and practitioners can use research to persuade or legitimate a decision or course of action. A school district that has initiated a new orchestra program, for example, may use research on the benefits of art education to garner support for its investment.

I found that school leaders did not use research instrumentally or conceptually to develop or modify their behavioral practices. School leaders adopted the no-excuses disciplinary model because they were desperate for something that worked. As Mr. Taylor put it, he learned to copy what worked for other schools to keep order rather than conceptualize what might work. School leaders instead used research *strategically* to justify existing practices (Nutley et al., 2000). To make sense of their controversial behavioral practices, school leaders turned to theory on the hidden curriculum and the teaching of middle-class norms.

Research tends to be more effective at identifying problems than addressing them. To be useful, research must align better with the practical needs of schools (Levin, 2004). School administrators need more than guiding principles; they need blueprints that they can easily implement. Those advocating research-based behavioral approaches like restorative justice or social and emotional learning, or broader frameworks like culturally relevant teaching, could learn from the no-excuses approach. To make their models easier to adapt, researchers should also provide concrete examples of school practices and rules, as well as exemplary schools (serving a similar student population) that are willing to share their materials and strategies with other schools. If school leaders had more options at their disposal, they could be more selective in copying what works.

Researchers can also help schools understand the costs and benefits of different disciplinary options. There is a surprising lack of work on school discipline. On the macro-level, a cataloging of the disciplinary practices of each school in several major cities would provide a starting point to identify the current approaches in use. More extensive measures of school order would also be informative as most states and school districts collect limited data on discipline (e.g., the number of student suspensions). Ethnographic accounts of how schools implement these disciplinary practices and what tensions result would provide insight into the different possibilities and tradeoffs. It might be particularly informative to study schools as they transition into new disciplinary models. Researchers, for example, could examine how no-excuses schools are integrating alternative disciplinary frameworks such as PBIS or restorative justice into their highly structured models. Do these schools continue to raise student test scores? Do teachers, students, and principals report greater satisfaction with, and commitment to their schools? How do these models affect teacher authority?

Research on discipline also has much to tell us about schools and inequality. I showed in this dissertation the importance of looking beyond test scores to understand how schools sustain or reduce inequalities. By spending time inside a school and getting to know the people most affected by school reforms, I revealed the challenges that schools face in trying to promote opportunity for disadvantaged students. By studying school discipline, I detailed how school structures and social relations shape students' experiences, expectations, and skills. Finally, by looking inside the black box of everyday classroom life, I discovered ways to think outside the box for new solutions to longstanding problems.

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APPENDIX

Interview Guide

These are the guiding questions I used for my interviews. I modified interview questions based on the particular interviewee, as well as the interviewee's responses and interests. Interview protocols were also modified over time.

School Leadership

Personal Background

- To start off, can you tell me a little about yourself?

    PROMPT: How old are you?
    PROMPT: Are you married? Does your spouse work?
    PROMPT: Do you have children? How old are they?
    PROMPT: What is your highest level of education? Where did you attend college? What did you study?
    PROMPT: What is your race/ethnicity?
    PROMPT: What type of neighborhood did you grow up in?
    PROMPT: What did your parents do?

- How strict were your parents? What did they do if you misbehaved?

- What was school like for you?

    PROMPT: What kind of kid were you? Did you misbehave?
    PROMPT: What did your teachers do when you misbehaved?
    PROMPT: How does this school compare to your own school experience?
    PROMPT: Did you have a favorite teacher? What was he/she like?
    PROMPT: What kind of skills/behaviors helped you be successful in school and college?

Professional Background

- So, what did you do after you graduated from college?

    PROMPT: Why did you leave the position?

- Can you tell me more about your teaching experiences?

PROMPT: What was the school like?
PROMPT: Demographics of teachers/students
PROMPT: How did you find teaching? What were some challenges?
PROMPT: Does your experience teaching influence your work as a school administrator? How so?

- How did you end up working at this school?

PROMPT: Why did you decide to take this job?
PROMPT: How long have you been working at this school?

- Is the job what you expected it to be?

PROMPT: Has your prior work experience been useful for what you do now?
PROMPT: How does this job compare to your prior jobs?

School Responsibilities

- What are your responsibilities at school? Have they changed over time?

PROMPT: Whom do you report to?

- Can you describe a typical workday?

PROMPT: Work hours
PROMPT: Who do you interact with most?

- What are some of the benefits about working here?

- What are some of the challenges?

- What types of conflicts do you have to deal with?

PROMPT: Tensions between staff members? Over what?
PROMPT: How do you resolve these?

- What types of interaction do you have with parents?

PROMPT: Have you had disagreements with parents over discipline issues?
PROMPT: How were these resolved?
PROMPT: How do you get dissenting parents on board?

- What are the benefits of being in a charter school v. a regular public school?

PROMPT: The drawbacks?

Policies and Practices

- What are your goals for the school? How will you accomplish them?
- What are your goals for your students? What is the school doing to help students achieve these goals?

    PROMPT: If goal is college: what do students need to be successful in college?

- What do you think students need to know to be successful in school? What do they need to do?

    PROMPT: Skills, behaviors, attitudes, work habits
    PROMPT: How do students learn these skills?
    PROMPT: How does the school teach these skills? How do you teach a child how to be organized? How to work hard?

- Since you've been here, have any policies or practices been modified/dropped over time? Why or why not?
- Of the policies/practices in place, which do you think are most essential to the school's functioning?

    PROMPT: Are there any that you think could or should be dropped?

- How are teachers evaluated?
- Why do you think it's difficult to retain teachers?

    PROMPT: What steps has the school taken to address this?

- Do you interact with any other schools? In what capacity?

School Culture/Discipline

- The school has a strict disciplinary system. What purpose does this system serve?

    PROMPT: What works about it? What doesn't work?

- Do you think the system works better for certain students? Why?

    PROMPT: Why do you think some students don't follow the rules?
    PROMPT: How do you motivate these students to be successful?

- Do you think a less rigid discipline system would work in the school? Why or why not?
- Can you talk about the community circle? Why is this an important part of the school day?
- Some student complaints: you are babying them, not letting them express themselves, not letting them have any fun, college isn't like this. What would be your response to these complaints?
- Can you describe the policies you have in place for suspensions and expulsions?

    PROMPT: How many students this past year were suspended/expelled? For what?

- Can you describe the student retention policy?

    PROMPT: How many students this past year were retained?
    PROMPT: How many students transferred?

Wrap-Up

- What would you change about the job?
- What are you most proud of having accomplished?
- Do you have any other future career plans?
- Anything else you'd like to add?

Teachers

Background

- Can you tell me a bit about yourself?

    PROMPT: How old are you?
    PROMPT: Are you married? Does your spouse work?
    PROMPT: Do you have children? How old are they?

PROMPT: What is your highest level of education? Where did you attend college? What did you study?
PROMPT: What is your race/ethnicity?
PROMPT: What type of neighborhood did you grow up in?
PROMPT: What did your parents do?

- How strict were your parents? What did they do if you misbehaved?

- What was school like for you?

PROMPT: What kind of kid were you? Did you misbehave?
PROMPT: What did your teachers do when you misbehaved?
PROMPT: How does this school compare to your own school experience?
PROMPT: Did you have a favorite teacher? What was he/she like?
PROMPT: What kind of skills/behaviors helped you be successful in school and college?

Teaching

- Why did you decide to become a teacher?

- Did you want to teach in an urban environment?

- What type of training/education did you receive?

PROMPT: What was most useful? Least useful?

- Can you tell me about your prior teaching experiences?

PROMPT: What was most challenging about your first year(s) teaching?
PROMPT: How did you become a better teacher?

- Why did you decide to teach at ___?

PROMPT: How did you learn about the school?
PROMPT: Have you worked with low-income or minority students before?
PROMPT: How does this school compare to your prior schools? What makes this school more/less effective?
PROMPT: Dream Academy calls itself a no-excuses school. What do you think this means? Did you know what no-excuses schools were before coming here?

- Do you plan to continue teaching? Do you have any other future career plans?

School Experience

- How long have you been teaching here? In the same grade/subject?

- Can you describe a typical workday for you, starting from when you get up?

- For second-year+ teacher: What was your first year here like?

    PROMPT: What were your initial impressions of the school? Students? Culture?
    PROMPT: What were some challenges?

- How would you describe your teaching experience so far this year?

    PROMPT: What have you enjoyed?
    PROMPT: What are some challenges? (student skill level, student behavior)

- When things are difficult, what motivates you to keep going?

- In what ways have you changed or developed as a teacher?

    PROMPT: Have you been given any advice/feedback that was particularly helpful?
    PROMPT: What struggles have you had (for example, with key levers)?
    PROMPT: What are some things that you have found work for you in your teaching and management?
    PROMPT: What do you see as the places where you could still improve?

- Do you feel like you get enough autonomy as a teacher?

    PROMPT: Have you gotten pushback on anything you've done or wanted to try?
    PROMPT: Do you feel like you get enough voice in this school around policies or procedures?

- How has your experience been with data-driven instruction? What does that mean?

    PROMPT: How do you feel about having your evaluation tied to student test results?
    PROMPT: What do you think about the move toward accountability in this country as a whole?

Discipline

- How would you describe your teaching style?

- How has classroom management been for you?

- What do you think about the school's disciplinary system?

    PROMPT: What works about it? What doesn't work?
    PROMPT: Which rules are most helpful?

- Do you think the system works better for certain students? Why?

    PROMPT: Why do you think some students don't follow the rules?

- Do you think a less rigid discipline system would work in the school? Why or why not?

- How comfortable are you with implementing the school's disciplinary system?

    PROMPT: With being strict?
    PROMPT: With sweating the small stuff? What's hard about it?
    PROMPT: Do you think you implement it as best as you can?

Kids

- Are the kids here similar to kids you've taught before? In what ways?

    PROMPT: What do you see as the strengths of your students? Weaknesses?

- What skills do you think the school is trying to teach kids? Why these ones?

    PROMPT: How do you think students develop these skills?
    PROMPT: Can you think of any examples of students where you've seen changes in their behaviors through their time here? What do you attribute these changes to?

- Have you been able to develop relationships with any kids here? How has that happened?

    PROMPT: What have you learned about them? Has this changed how you interact with them in school?
    PROMPT: Have you gotten to know any families?

- What do you see as the biggest obstacles to your students' learning?

- Why do you think this school has been able to raise students' test scores so much?

For Supervisors Only

- Can you talk a bit about your experiences as a supervisor?

    PROMPT: What have been some challenges?
    PROMPT: What have teachers struggled with?
    PROMPT: How do you make a good teacher?

Wrap-up

- Can you recount any memorable moments/stories so far this year? Either bad or good?
- What have you learned so far?

    PROMPT: About yourself? Your students? Teaching?

- Do you set goals for yourself as a teacher?

    PROMPT: How successful have you been at meeting these goals? Have these goals changed?
    PROMPT: What does your ideal classroom look like?

- Anything else you want to share?

Students

Introduction

- To start off, can you tell me a little about yourself?

    PROBE: How would you describe yourself?

- Can you tell me about your family?

    PROBE: Whom do you live with?
    PROBE: How old are your siblings? What do they do?

- What do your parents do? What are their (her) work hours?
- How much schooling have your parents had?
- Were your parents born in this country? If not, do you know when they came?

    PROBE: Do you speak another language at home?

- Where do you live? How long have you lived there?

    PROBE: What do you think about [this city]? Good/bad things about living here?

Aspirations

- How far would you like to go in school? How did you decide on this?
- Do you think you'll be able to get that far?

    PROBE: What do you think you'll need to be able to get to college?
    PROBE: What might be some obstacles to getting the education you want?

- What do you think college is like? Where did you get those ideas from?

    PROBE: Do you know anyone who has gone to college?

- What does success in school look like for you? Out-of-school?

    PROBE: Do you think it's difficult to be successful at this school?

School

- Can you tell me about all the different schools you've attended?

    PROBE: How long have you been at this school?

- Why did you decide to come here?

    PROBE: Do you think this school is better than other [city] schools?

- Do you like coming to school? Why/why not?

    PROBE: What do you like about the school? What don't you like?
    PROBE: What advice would you give someone who was thinking of coming here?
    PROBE: How does this school compare to your last school?

- Why do you think this school is so strict?

    PROBE: Do you think it's necessary? What rules are extra?
    PROBE: I've noticed that students take advantage of teachers who aren't that strict. Why do they do this? It's like they are forcing teachers to be strict.

- How often do you get in trouble in school? For what types of behaviors?

    PROBE: Why do you act up?
    PROBE: Have you been benched?
    PROBE: Do you think you deserve the consequences you've been given?
    PROBE: What helps you, or motivates you to behave?

- Why do you think other kids get in trouble at school?

- Let's talk about your teachers. How do your teachers treat you?

    PROBE: Do you feel like your teachers understand you? Listen to you? Respect you?
    PROBE: Do you think that teachers treat different students differently?
    PROBE: Do you have a favorite? Are there teachers you don't like? Why?
    PROBE: What advice could you give them to improve?
    PROBE: Do you feel comfortable talking to your teachers or asking them for help?

- What types of things help you learn best in school?

    PROBE: How often do you get to do these things?

- Do you think you've changed from being at this school? What caused this change?

    PROBE: What have you learned at school?
    PROBE: Do you ever use things you've learned in school when you're not in school?

- Do you think the school is stressful?

    PROBE: What makes it stressful? What would make it less stressful?
    PROBE: What do you think about the workload? The practice tests?

Home

- Can you tell me what you do when school is over?

    PROBE: Are you involved with any clubs or sports?
    PROBE: Do you have any responsibilities at home?
    PROBE: Where do you do homework? How long does it take you?

- What do you do on weekends?

PROBE: Do you hang out with kids from school? What do you do?
PROBE: Who are your closest friends at school?
PROBE: Who else do you see?

- What kind of relationship do you have with your parents?

  PROBE: How often do you talk to them? About what?

- Are your parents strict?

  PROBE: What kind of rules do you have at home?
  PROBE: Do you think they are more or less strict than the school?

- What sort of things would you get in trouble for at home?

  PROBE: What types of rewards or consequences do your parents use?
  PROBE: What happens when your parents get called by the school?
  PROBE: What type of discipline do you respond to at home?

- Do you behave differently at home than you do at school? How so?

  PROBE: Do you behave better for your parents than for your teachers? Why?

- What types of things do your parents try to teach you?

  PROBE: What values or skills?

- How involved are your parents with your education?

  PROBE: Do they help you with homework?
  PROBE: Do they ask you about school? Do they like the school?
  PROBE: Have they given you advice about how to act at school?

- Anything else you'd like to add?

- Do you have any questions for me?

Student Focus Groups

Introduction

- To start off, can each of you tell me a little about yourself?

  PROBE: In a sentence, how would you describe yourself?
  PROBE: Can you tell me about your family?

- If you had three wishes, what would you wish for?
- Now think about the adults in your life. Of all the adults you know personally, think of the one you would most like to be like. Who is this person and what do you admire about this person?
- How far would you like to go in school? How did you decide on this?

    PROBE: What do you think college is like? Where did you get those ideas from?

School

- What makes this school different than other schools?

    PROBE: What do you think about all the testing at this school?

- Why do you think this school is so strict?

    PROBE: Do you think it's necessary? What rules are extra?
    PROBE: I've noticed that students take advantage of teachers who aren't that strict. Why do they do this? It's like they are forcing teachers to be strict.

- What advice would you give someone who was thinking of coming here?

    PROBE: What do you like about the school? What don't you like?

- Can you tell me about something that happened in school this year that made you feel angry or frustrated? Happy or excited?

    PROBE: When you feel angry at school, what helps you stop being angry?
    PROBE: Do you remember being excited about learning something?

- Can you tell me about a time you got in trouble in school?

    PROBE: What did you do? Why?
    PROBE: Do you think you deserved the consequences you've been given?

- You often see the same students in detention. Why do you think this is the case?

    PROBE: Does detention work? What about bench?
    PROBE: What motivates you to behave? Do you work hard in school?

- Let's talk about your teachers. Who is your favorite teacher and why?

    PROBE: Are there teachers you don't like? Why?
    PROBE: Are your teachers fair?
    PROBE: What advice could you give them to improve?
    PROBE: Do you feel comfortable talking to your teachers or asking them for help?
    PROBE: Are you scared of any of your teachers?

- Do you think you've changed from being at this school? How would you describe this?

  What caused this change?

    PROBE: What have you learned at school?
    PROBE: Do you ever use things you've learned in school when you're not in school?

- What is self-control? Is it important? Do you have it?

- What does success in school look like for you? Out-of-school?

    PROBE: Do you think it's difficult to be successful at this school?

Home

Now we're going to talk about your parents. Remember that you do not have to answer any question you don't want to answer.

- What do you do after school?

- Do your parents worry about particular things happening to you like getting in trouble in or out of school? What do they do to keep these things from happening to you?

- Are your parents strict?

    PROBE: What kind of rules do you have at home? Do you think they are more or less strict than the school is?
    PROBE: What sort of things would you get in trouble for at home?
    PROBE: What types of rewards or consequences do your parents use?

- Do you behave differently at home than you do at school? How so?

    PROBE: Do you behave better for your parents than for your teachers? Why?

- What types of things do your parents try to teach you?

    PROBE: What values or skills?

- Anything else you'd like to add?

- Do you have any questions for me?

Parent/Guardian

Personal Background/Parenting

- So, to start off, can you tell me about yourself and your family?

    PROBE: Who lives in your household? (age, schooling)
    PROBE: Are you currently working?
    - What skills do you need to be successful at your job?
    - How satisfied are you with your job?
    - Do you have plans to change jobs?

    PROBE: Is your spouse/partner working?
    PROBE: How old are you?
    PROBE: What's your race/ethnicity?
    PROBE: Where were you born? When did you come to the US?

- What's a typical day look like for you?

    PROBE: What do you do for fun? What does your child do for fun? What types of things do you like to do together?
    PROBE: Does your child hang out with kids from school?
    PROBE: What is your child doing this summer?

- How long have you lived here? What do you like about living here? What don't you like?

    PROBE: Would you want to move from here?

- Where did you grow up? Can you describe what your neighborhood was like?

    PROBE: Who did you live with?
    PROBE: Can you tell me a bit about what school like was for you? What kind of student were you? How much schooling did you get?
    PROBE: What did you do outside of school?

- Can you tell me a little about your parents?

    PROBE: What kind of work did your parents do?

PROBE: In what ways is your parenting style similar to or different than your parents?
- Has your parenting style changed over time?
- Do you parent your different kids differently?

- How strict would you say you are?

  PROBE: What kind of rules do you have at home?

- What sort of things does your child get in trouble for?

  PROBE: Do you use rewards or consequences?
  PROBE: What motivates your child?
  PROBE: What do you do if your child doesn't listen or talks back?

- Does anyone else help parent your child? What is their style?

- How would you describe _____? What is he/she like at home?

  PROBE: What do you see as your child's strengths? Things they are still working on?

- Parents teach their children numerous things. What are the most important things you try to teach your child? Why these things? How do you teach them?

  PROBE: Are there certain things you teach your child because they live in this city?

- What do you see as your role in your child's education?

  PROBE: Is there anything you do at home to help your child do well in school?
  PROBE: Have you given your child advice about how to act at school?
  PROBE: Do you participate in the parent organization? Why or why not?

School

- Why did you enroll your child here? How did you hear about it?

  PROBE: What school did your child go to before this? What was that like?

- What do you expect from a school?

- Has the school met your expectations?

  PROBE: What are some things you like/don't like?

PROBE: Would you recommend it to a friend?

- What has the school been like for your child? Does he/she talk much about school?

  PROBE: Has your child had problems with behavior at school? Can you tell me about it? Why do you think he/she has had problems?
  PROBE: Has your child complained about the school? What have you said to them?
  PROBE: Is he/she planning to come back next year?
  PROBE: Has the school been stressful for your child?

- The school has a sweating the small stuff model where they give consequences for small misbehaviors (putting a head down, talking in the hallway, coming to school late). Students often complain about the school being too strict or extra. Do you think the school is too strict?

  PROBE: Is this strictness necessary for your child? For the school?
  PROBE: Do you think students get enough independence at school? Enough opportunity to express themselves or voice their opinions?

- Was there ever a time when you had a question or a problem with something at school?

  PROBE: What was the problem – can you tell me a little bit about that?
  PROBE: Were there any (other) times when you contacted a teacher or principal about something going on at school?

- How often do teachers typically communicate with you? What are those conversations like? Are they helpful?

  PROBE: Would you prefer more/less interaction with teachers?
  PROBE: If teachers call you about your child misbehaving, do you do anything at home?

- The school tries to teach different skills to students like self-control, respect, appropriate ways to talk to teachers. Do you think it's the school's role to do this?

  PROBE: Do you think your child needs to learn these skills/behaviors?
  PROBE: Do you think your child has learned any skills/behaviors at this school?
  PROBE: Have you noticed any changes in your child's behavior since he/she has been at the school?

- All schools have to deal with student behavior but urban schools seem to have larger problems with keeping order. Why do you think this is the case?

    PROBE: Why can't some teachers seem to control their classrooms?
    PROBE: One explanation some people give is that parents don't train their kids. Do you think that's a stereotype?

- Do you know this model would work in the regular public schools?
- If there were something you could tell the principal or your child's teachers to make the school a better place for your child, what would it be?

    PROBE: Are there other things the school could do to help engage students more?

Final Thoughts

- What are your hopes for your child's future?

    PROBE: What are your worries?

- What are some challenges you face as a parent?

    PROBE: What might help reduce some of these challenges?

- Do you have anything you'd like to share about your family or the school?