

Running head: The Failure of Foucauldian Urban Schooling

The Failure of Foucauldian Urban Schooling: Abstraction,  
Panopticism and the Carceral City

David W. Boles

NJIT/Rutgers-Newark/UMDNJ

The Failure of Foucauldian Urban Schooling: Abstraction,  
Panopticism and the Carceral City

The great French philosopher and self-aggrieved sociologist Michel Foucault echoes and haunts the idea of urban schooling via anecdotal analysis and desperate discourse in his classic work *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (1977). That book has been used as a template by some scholars for creating effective schooling systems in urban centers but the obverse terror revealed in Foucault's research has been put into practice as a modern pedagogic methodology. The certain failure of the system Foucault described for the application of epistemological patterns creates an uncertain future for urban schools and the cities that house them.

Foucault's historical investigation into discipline and punishment is more warning than metaphor – Foucault isn't enamored with the ideas expressed in his book despite what most scholarship suggests – much of the book is actually a tongue-in-cheek reeking of the absurd, earnest status of static institutions like schools and prisons. The philosophy of the unblinking watched that binds everyone beyond the urban school and into a city-prison state is what Foucault labels “The Carceral City” and that idea proves the final, ominous threat to the morality of humanity that he submits for examination.

This paper will analyze three themes found in Foucault's *Discipline and Punish*: Abstraction of the individual by assigning negative labeling as a form of minority repression for the benefit of the majority power; Panopticism as a failed modern means of controlling the behavior of the urban student's mind and body; and the Carceral City where Foucault sets forth the groundwork for how punishment and rigidity imposed on urban schools inspired by the

criminal justice system will willingly reverse osmose back into the suburbia proper and imprison invisible and inequal social strata beyond the urban core.

### *Abstraction*

Punishment by abstraction of the minority one in favor of the majority sum is one way, Foucault suggests, that the power of the status quo is able to survive and serve its proponents of proprietary knowledge. Abstraction is an effective and common method of blurring individuals and softening edges of uniqueness and fogging direct perception. An unnamed person in a group is easier to dismiss than a person with a name standing alone at the forefront. Foucault makes an argument early in the book that punishment moved from touching the body – via whip or chain or sword – to a manipulation of the soul – incarceration, time management, strict rules – which was a much more effective means of gaining power and knowledge over a large group of bodies by those who were already in power and needed to maintain a position of strength in perpetuity. Marks on the soul are less visible than weeping wounds on a body but the penultimate payoff for punishing the soul requires an a fortiori metalogic acquiescence that commands loyalty and preserves obedience that endures long beyond twist of the rack and screw.

Here is how Foucault (1977) describes why the majority must contain, control, identify and label individuals who step outside the group norm as “deviants” who threaten the common good:

The offence opposes an individual to the entire social body; in order to punish him, society has the right to oppose him in its entirety. It is an unequal struggle: on one side are all the forces, all the power, all the rights. And this is how it should be, since the defence of each individual is involved. Thus a formidable right to punish is established, since the offender becomes the common enemy. Indeed, he is worse than an enemy, for

it is from within society that he delivers his blows – he is nothing less than a traitor, a ‘monster’. How could society not have an absolute right over him? How could it not demand, quite simply, his elimination? And although it is true that the principle of punishment must be subscribed to in the pact, must not each citizen, logically, accept the extreme penalty for those of them who attack them as a body. (p. 90).

Foucault believes everyone is bound together as a covey of individuals who then create a ruling order where the individuality that ties them together is cast of to create a new hegemonic society. That new society, he contends, is not an agreement to sustain a community morality in the way author Joan Didion argues in her essay *On Morality*. Didion argues morality is defined as the “promises we make to each other” and everyone agrees to not to kill each other or betray trust in each other in exchange for the same promise from everyone else in the community (Abcarian & Klotz, 2002). Didion extends that argument to cover all facets of a shared morality including how children are promised education by those who have dominion over them.

Foucault believes the idea of the individual in a schooling system is morally dangerous because students who are not are controlled through power and technology act out of unison and threaten the cohesiveness of the controlling core. No promises are exchanged because that self-ostracism necessarily leads to being labeled deviant – or “low-income” or “learning disabled” or in need of “special education” – because the student is acting out against the machine even if the student cannot control the perceived offense due to birth status or cultural position in the community. That student has become an anathema to the overall fabric of society by being unable to conform to the mandate of power and serve the whims of the masters in power.

This sort of loss of personality and personal perspective occurs in several ways in urban schooling; abstraction by subtraction creates an acute compression of desire, a cudgel for racial

profiling and a platform for economic and social repression for being beyond the norm.

Abnormality, Foucault repeatedly warns throughout his book, is dangerous because it encompasses the unpredictable unknown. The machine of society must be run from a reliable power base.

Henry Giroux (1989) expands on Foucault's idea of labeling by investigating the conflict theorist view that urban schools are micro representations of a society that publicly vow upward action and promise jobs and joining in the process of politics if one submits to the mechanics of education but in the private reality, Giroux claims, the purpose of urban schools is to create class, race and gender inequities. Student dissent is silenced by labeling those who dare to contest the fairness of the system. Those deviants are considered dangerous and they are removed from the discourse of prosperity by being cut off and segregated with labels of misbehavior that reinforces power inequities where "schools are public spheres polluted by private interests, and dominant language for equal educational opportunities versus the evidence of failure as a majority experience for low-income adolescents" (H. A. Giroux & McLaren, 1989). Jean Anyon sounds a similar note in *Ghetto Schooling* where students are shunted and ignored by the urban governing core and thought of as unreachable (Anyon, 1997).

During the 1970's students in urban schools who were unable to become accomplished in regular schools were labeled by the system as "potential dropouts" who eventually became 'at-risk students' and were then finally marked as needing "special education" in the politically correct parlance of the 1980's (Chambon *et al.*, 1999). Urban school children who did not fit in and communicate in the codes of the majority because of cultural castration and aesthetic anemia were "presumed to be violent" (Watts & Erevelles, 2004) and in order to process them through the system they were labeled "emotionally disturbed" and warehoused in special education

classes. In most of those special education classrooms in both suburban and urban cities Latino and African American males from low-income households were the majority in their minority and they were stuck with the label of being violent merely because of their socio-economic status and skin color and the perceived threat that they were dangerous to their classmates (Johnson *et al.*, 2003).

Critical Race Theorists (CRT) and Disability Studies hint that the real cause of violence in urban schooling is motivated by the violence of unequal social constraints these children are born into that ultimately force working class and low-income African American and Latino males to grow up festering, touchable and in opposition to the pre-determined expectation that the role they play in school is one of prisoner and not learner. Many of those disenfranchised students who are most consistently disciplined in urban schools are also labeled Educationally Mentally Retarded (EMR) and Trainable Mentally Retarded (TMR) (Watts & Erevelles, 2004) so they can more easily be manipulated through a system that plans to do as little as possible to help them press into mainstream democracy. (Ayers *et al.*, 2001)

While urban schools could make a greater effort to change the system and the perspectives of the oppressed, schools – as Foucault identified and warned – “use the oppressive ideologies associated with race, class and disability to justify the construction of certain students as ‘violent’ ‘deviant,’ or ‘disabled,’ thereby making it an individual rather than a social problem.” (Watts & Erevelles, 2004) It is unfortunate that “entire groups of poor, minority and labeled students are written off as uneducable.” (Casella, 2001a)

Students who wore those labels grew in size and stature as a group and eventually became the majority in ordinary mainstream schools in large urban centers like New York City and their presence in those schools created a whole new meta label: “lower-tier schools.” Those

lower-tier schools were filled with students who did not regularly attend classes; the pregnant and the mothering; the violent; and those who had disciplinary problems and “holdovers” who had to repeat grades. Those lower-tier schools were a problem for the majority in the school system because those labeled students were “recent immigrants, children with familial histories of abuse and foster children in group homes and teenagers who did not know how to read or write or do rudimentary math” (Chambon et al., 1999) and the majority saw them as a threat to their way of knowing and had zero interest in providing them the proper proctoring and education-on-their-terms that might begin to eliminate educational and future work disparities.

If there had been an economic or power benefit for the majority to include those labeled students in their majority system the impetus for inclusion would have been created. (Skiba et al., 2003) Emile Durkheim suggested in *Suicide* “whenever we are ignorant of the reasons for the moral maxim we obey, we conform solely because it possesses social authority” (Durkheim, 1966) and the lack of morality found in the cutting off of a curable path for removing the labeling of urban students creates lifelong mistrust in a system where civil rights are necessarily suspended during school hours (Casella, 2001b) as a frightened precaution but it is problematic when those civil rights are never restored beyond the classroom when the fear is proven to be unfounded or cured.

Foucauldian Urban Schooling suggests the easiest way to discipline, control and mediate urban students is via school policies that are set in place that claim to prevent violence: Control the labeled aggressors and student wounding will decline. The problem with that methodology is that it teaches the aggrieved labeled student their place in the system of power by using class and perceived intelligence and race as common identifiers. Using special education labeling as a hammer to repress expectation for urban students who only seek majority acceptance and

inclusion creates “the racialization of disability and the disabling of race” in the “internal colonies” of urban schooling in America. (Watts & Erevelles, 2004)

The idea of repression of expression and achievement through labeling also seeps into a much more sinister everyday form indicating a universal Durkheimian anomic listlessness of disassociation and abandonment (Ballantine & Spade, 2004) as described by Brian Sipe in an article for the *Harvard Educational Review* where he related a conversation he had with other teachers during a brief tenure as a teacher in a New York City School:

I remember being repulsed by colleagues who referred to their students as ‘bitches,’ ‘assholes,’ and ‘animals,’ to name but a few epithets. But given the oppositional atmosphere of our school, this same dehumanization strategy is perhaps a natural, if extremely distressing, reaction to the circumstances: If a disruptive student insults you, what does it matter? After all, he or she is just an ‘asshole.’ (Sipe, 2004)

The reason labeling has failed urban schooling in the Foucauldian sense is that the idea of discipline and punishment is to teach the individual through the unwilling ostracism of body and spirit modification that their behavior is an anathema to the desire of the majority. In a Foucauldian world, those deviants from the norm would modify their behavior and rejoin the group after the corrective lessons were accepted and marred into the pulse of the human form. Unfortunately, once urban low-income African American and Latino males are labeled they are stuck with that branding with no way to recursively protest or self-correct back into the majority power/knowledge system (H. Giroux, 1999).

Those marked students are left behind to later fill the school-to-prison pipeline (Pettit & Western, 2004) where “urban pedagogies serve an economic function: to channel young people of color in the U.S. into the prison system” (Duncan, 2000) and they are left signaling through



the flames (Artaud *et al.*, 2001) condemned as discarded student bodies who are no longer able to raise a hand to be called on in class and who are instead destined to lower their hands behind their backs for shackling on the short track to incarceration via the imperfect eye of the Panopticon. Ironically, the rest of mainstream America may not be far behind if urban Panopticism leads us into sustaining The Carceral City.

### *Panopticism*

Jeremy Bentham's Panopticon of 1789 inspired the Foucauldian idea of an ever-vigilant gaze that would mechanically and automatically coerce immediate mind, body and spirit group norms. Bentham's Panopticon consists of a central tower that can see into every cell. Each cell has iron bars facing to the central tower and back wall of the cell consists of a barred window that allows those in the central tower to monitor each prisoner merely by "watching the movement of shadows against the cell window." (Bentham, 1995) The chilling part of the Panopticon is that the inmate has no idea if or when the gaze is actually watching the body.

Foucault found that sort of compression of time and space as a corrective method intriguing for schools because it made the instructor the central tower and the students sitting in arranged rows the shadowy inmates being watched. The beauty of the Panopticon, according to both Bentham and Foucault, is that the prisoners and students are always aware they are always being watched by an authority and that gaze, that never-blinking open eye, creates a sense of urgency and fear of retribution in the inmate body and school child. Michel Foucault (1977) describes his idea of Panopticonic surveillance thusly:

The perfect disciplinary apparatus would make it possible for a single gaze to see everything constantly. A central point would be both the source of light illuminating everything, and a locus of convergence for everything that must be known: a perfect eye

that nothing would escape and a centre towards which all gazes would be turned. (p. 173)

The unblinking Panoptic Gaze is how people keep an eye on each other and the internalization of that gaze enables each person to, in Foucault's view, reflexively surveil the self for inner disciplining. "Slavery is no longer needed as a method of exercising power; according to Foucault, modernity is far more efficient: through urban schools and other institutionalized practices, human bodies have been schooled and coerced, often unwittingly, for the agenda of the dominant culture." (Chambon et al., 1999)

In the nineteenth century schools were created on the prison template and the entire goal was to gaze upon and openly manipulate children who were in the custody of its walls and "curriculum and methods were designed to ensure the discipline and control of children's bodies; and schools were divided into vocational schools for lower-class immigrants to ensure the continuance of social order in the world of work." (Watts & Erevelles, 2004) Brian Sipe (2004) described the infrastructure of his New York City school this way:

There is no natural light in the corridor, and their hard, dull surfaces give the place an institutional feel. The light that does enter the building is heavily filtered by the sturdy metal grates that cover each window. These metal grates, as well as the cage-like structures that 'fall-proof' the stairwells, were what first caused me to think of a prison. (Sipe, 2004)

If students are placed in classrooms that are built to be cages one should not be surprised when they begin to begin to behave like animals.

The authoritarian gaze in the prison-like setting of urban schools was not abstracted – it was meant to be a specifically designed pinning look. The initial corrective gaze of a teacher

was authorized to maintain the order of the power majority and to be “solidified in the architectural form, where its object would be in no position to ‘transcend’ its objectivation in return. Foucault shows the gaze will become congealed in architecture and in the structures of certain forms of knowledge.” (Levy, 2000)

The architectural urban city grid system was not only employed to help organize traffic patterns and neighborhoods in the early 1800’s – it was also set up to create an easy way to regimentally surveil city blocks for wrongdoers and to aid in block-by-block searches for criminals (Roberts & Steadman, 1999). Many modern urban schools still conform to the “grid system” of education inside the classroom where the students are tightly arranged in rows of desks facing the watchful eye of an instructor mimicking the 1805 old school style of the Joseph Lancaster Monitorial method of teaching where thousands of students surrounded a single instructor. (Hassard & Rowlinson, 2002) “Classrooms have always operated according to spatial, temporal, and normative logics of confinement. Disciplining bodies has always been the work of schools.” (Goodson, 2002)

Foucauldian Urban Schooling applies the same approach in the classroom where the sorting of students based on intelligence and capacity to learn is regimented into “neat ranks of desks under surveillance of the teacher they face; the timetable, with its careful measurement of time allocated to a repeatable sequence of activities; and the examination, by which students are observed, ranked and measured against the norm.” (H. A. Giroux & McLaren, 1989).

Precise gestures (Foucault, 1977) for participating in class discussions and all of those expected Panoptic behaviors moderated by the gaze were important to maintaining discipline in schools. Students were required to “willingly give up individual freedom in exchange for receiving the benefits of education” (Blades, 1997). If a student rejected the conformity of

expectation and rejected the corrective gaze they were determined to be “‘unruly bodies’ that were subjected to the ‘ceremony of punishment’ that was used to make everyone aware through the body of the deviant of the unrestrained presence of disciplinary power in the school.” (Watts & Erevelles, 2004)

Panopticism also takes a more insidious form in the all-seeing wrinkled gaze of standardized testing and SAT scores where non-abstract quantifiable stratifications are applied based on comparative performance without any consideration of economic status, access to cultural capital or other advantages provided upper income students merely by status at birth. Urban schooled children are routinely aware they are not measuring up (Anyon, 1997) when it comes to test scores compared to their majority in-power classmates and that they are “failing to meet an omniscient standard of performance as they begin to learn they can never measure up on standardized tests even though they may want to imitate the lives of doctors and lawyers and politicians they watch on television.” (Lesko, 2001)

SAT scores of 450-500 when even middling schools demand scores of 1,000 for enrollment shows low-income urban students they will not get into college because their better prepared mainstream peers routinely score 1,200 to 1,600. (Watts & Erevelles, 2004) Those urban students also realize they have no hope of ever catching up because their most productive years were spent either suspended or being labeled as deficient. (Haberman, 2003) In a Spring 2004 report in New Jersey 18% of the public K12 enrollment was African American and 22% of that group were in Special Education programs and 39% were suspended and 8% were labeled Gifted and Talented. Latinos consisted of 16% of the public K12 enrollment and made up 15% of Special Education programs and were 18% of the suspensions and 8% were labeled Gifted and Talented. White students, on the other hand, were 59% of the total Public K12 enrollment

and 61% of Special Education programs and they made up 41% of the suspensions and an incredible 75% were labeled Gifted and Talented (*Education watch new jersey key facts and figures*, 2004).

17% of students enrolled in American public schools are African American and they make up 32% of out-of-school suspensions while the nation's prison population was 56% African American (Thompson, 2004) and even more importantly school "suspension and expulsion reports do not reveal rates of violence; they only state the numbers of people who got suspended or expelled." (Casella, 2001a).

That marked cleaving of entire student bodies by measured abilities pre-determined by race and socio-economic status results in violence inside and outside the urban school system. When the social repression of urban students is given higher rank than education proper and that ranking is supported by local boards of education the result is a systemic propensity for anger and frustration that results in violence (Rozycki, 2003). The *Brown v. Board of Education* decision in 1954 began a wash of violence that still crests across urban American shores as claimed by Watts & Ervelles (2004):

Desegregated schools and waves of immigrants of color from the West Indies, Puerto Rico and Latin America threatened 'White hegemony' and the arrival of these outsiders who not only threatened the social order of schooling but were also targets of violence in addition to creating violence as a means of survival became monitored by surveillance cameras, security guards and metal detectors. Although schools are not always built to resemble the Panopticon this principle is apparent in the ways in which schools rely on some form of exclusions or ostracisms to control the movements and behaviors of students. (pgs. 279-280)

The reason for violence, especially in urban schools, is to let others view it or, in the Panopticonic sense, to act out in front of the eternal gaze in order to self-define and represent a viable alternative measure of living. Violence demands witnesses to be remembered. When one student attacks another student in public – even in “symbolic violence” (Bourdieu, 1977) – it is to demonstrate dominance to others watching and the ensuing punishment by the Panoptic eye is a mark of worthiness and status in the cultural norms of low-income urban students.

“Violence is often a means of asserting power, and power must be recognized in order it to be effective.” (Casella, 2001a) Evolutionary psychologist Robert Wright writes in his book *The Moral Animal* that he views a strong correlation between urban violence and self-worth: “Young men who kill get respect – at least within the circle of young men whose opinions they care about. This is evidence that the worst parts of human nature are always near the surface, ready to rise when cultural restraint weakens.” (Wright, 1995)

Violence, especially in urban schools, led to a trickle-down program inspired by the criminal justice system’s “Three Strikes” law called “Zero Tolerance.” Zero Tolerance was initially intended to address the issue of guns in school but quickly expanded its scope to punish nearly all disputed behavior by removing the student from the school. While the squinting Panoptic eye of Zero Tolerance policies police and punish bad behavior it merely displaces the violent offenders from the school to the street corner. 90% of Zero Tolerance policies (Ayers et al., 2001) are being enforced in American schools, but “that policy has done little to remove the despair, alienation, fear and violence that pervade both U.S. schools and the U.S. society.” (Casella, 2001a) Zero Tolerance policies were generally accepted as appropriate by teachers and staff in urban schools because it was seen as an effective way to deal with students by deferring to a higher authority beyond the classroom even though the policy criminalized student behavior

for meager offenses like bringing a penknife to school or for being in possession of an empty lipstick case because it resembled a spent rifle shell. (Ayers et al., 2001)

Zero Tolerance insidiously helped schools deal with students who were not only violent but also merely inappropriate in constitution because that policy became a coercive strategy for preventing bad behavior. (Johnson et al., 2003) “At times, in the name of violence prevention, students [in urban Zero Tolerance schools] were not allowed to leave classrooms, talk to each other or attend certain school functions.” (Casella, 2001b) “African-Americans are approximately twice as likely to experience Zero Tolerance, up to two-thirds of the “minority” students in some communities have been swept into the zero tolerance frenzy.” (Ayers et al., 2001)

Zero Tolerance policies in urban schools are a failed Panoptic method of punishment that allows no insight or bending for appropriate punishment in a contextual case-by-case basis. Zero Tolerance methodology is ultimately unenforceable in the long term because even the smallest inopportune offense can lead to the forever removal of students from the school system. While some may argue that any offense against the norm should be punished – and Foucault would agree – but Foucault would only concur if that punishment were fairly applied to every student without pause. The brief history of Zero Tolerance policies clearly indicates low-income and minority students are punished at a much higher rate than their White contemporaries. (Johnson et al., 2003)

The reason Foucauldian Urban Schooling has failed on the Panoptic level is because of the disassociation of authority between teacher and student. Students are moved like cattle from classroom to classroom with different teachers teaching individual topics. School workers mill

about checking hall passes and, in extreme cases, they even demand forms of proper identification from students who may not have a government issued ID. (Skiba et al., 2003)

School guards are employed to patrol the campus perimeter as a *prima facie* military force with the right to search personal belongings, to use metal-detecting wands and to independently enforce codes and norms of conduct that urban school administrations may have only implied and not sounded as official school policy. “Schools and teachers are shirking their responsibilities as guardians of the young if they do not advocate core standards such as honesty, respect, integrity and the pursuit of excellence.” (Chambon et al., 1999) Teachers are afraid of the students (Sipe, 2004), (Anyon, 1997), (Ingersoll, 2004) and are afraid to give direct reprimands and so the immediate, corrective, Panoptic gaze is delayed in favor of conflict resolution sessions that water down the infraction and further postpone the implementation of any correction. The danger in that pattern of Panopticism is the teacher relinquishes direct and observable power to punish and that results in long term damage as Watts & Ervelles (2004) warn:

Students are gradually introduced to the tactics and practices that police officers use in handling street criminals. This process, instead of preventing violence, socializes students into a culture of violence that may not have been apparent to them before, but that now becomes a natural part of their existence. (p. 283)

If teachers desire authority in the classroom they must demand an authoritarian role in the society of their schools. A school guard with a badge and a uniform does not automatically carry the same Panoptic weight as a loving teacher who desires to move students into academic success and respectability in society. “The inevitable surveillance and control of the reform by a centralized agency functioned to limit the involvement of teachers and students in the reform. As



Foucault suggests, this functioning is the effect of power in attempts at curriculum reform.”  
(Blades, 1997)

Teachers, like school guards, are not automatically provided respect with their implied authority. The respect must come from the immediacy of attention to student needs: Reward the good; correct the bad. (Hassard & Rowlinson, 2002) Environmental conditions also play a role in successful Panoptic teaching. If a classroom is noisy, unsafe and in bad structural condition that will be create a reflexive response in the behavior of the urban student. “Turnstile jumping is more common in a dirty, dangerous, subway station than a clean, safe one. Children who misbehave in a rowdy classroom are less likely to do so in a well-managed one.” (Sipe, 2004)

For Foucauldian Urban Schooling to be effective the teacher must immediately and intensely reward and punish the wayward student and the means for that instantaneous correction is eyes on student. When in-classroom morality and retribution are deferred to outside influences like school guards and the criminal court system the Panoptic style of discipline and punishment in an urban school makes a möbius strip of failed policy. Michel Foucault’s writing across his short life was influenced by Durkheim (Miller, 1993) and in *The Division of Labor in Society* one can view the moral seedlings of Foucauldian Urban Schooling:

...Suffering is not a gratuitous act of cruelty. It is a sign indicating that the sentiments of the collectivity are still unchanged, that the communion of minds sharing the same beliefs remains absolute, and in this way the injury that the crime has inflicted upon society is made good...theories that deny to punishment any expiatory character appear, in the minds of man, to subvert the social order. (Durkheim & Halls, 1997)

*The Carceral City*

Subverting the social order is the primary concern that creates the Carceral City. The Carceral City, as described by Foucault, is an urban system modeled on a prison. The perpetual police state of the Carceral City demands to know everything about everyone while remaining transparent to the population. This psychic and evergreen incarceration moves beyond the educational Panopticon and into the examination of every breath of every citizen at every moment. Foucault (1977) sounds a warning against the Carceral City in a mere 15 pages as the final chapter of *Discipline and Punish*.

The carceral texture of society assures both the real capture of the body and its perpetual observation; it is, by its very nature, the apparatus of punishment that conforms most completely to the new economy of power and the instrument for the formation of knowledge that his very economy needs. Its Panoptic functioning enables it to play this double role. By virtue of its methods of fixing, dividing, recording, it has been one of the simplest, crudest, also most concrete, but perhaps most indispensable conditions for the development of this immense activity of examination that has objectified human behavior. (pgs. 304-305).

As a society Americans use methods from the criminal justice system to routinely control disaffected and disremembered students in low-income urban schools. (Thompson, 2004) There is, however, already a non-transparent flow of thought afoot to press Panopticonic thinking and the Carceral itself into mainstream America beyond the classroom. Evidence of this malicious shift masked in the best interests of schoolchildren was reported by the *New York Times* on November 29, 2004:

A proposal by the federal government to create a vast new database of enrollment records on all college and university students is raising concerns that the move will erode the privacy rights of students. Until now, universities have provided individual student information to the federal government only in connection with federally financed student aid. Otherwise, colleges and universities submit information about overall enrollment, graduation, prices and financial aid without identifying particular students. For the first time, however, colleges and universities would have to give the government data on all students individually, whether or not they received financial assistance, with their Social Security numbers. (Schemo, 2004)

It is a minute leap from tracking students in that manner to tracking everyday citizens in a new Carceral City. If students can be willy-nilly databased for future reference why not also include their parents along the way since parents are an important factor in a child's success and school? Why stop at the parents? Teachers should be tracked via national clearinghouse also because they have influence over students during school hours.

Dr. Edward Rozycki of Widener University creates an effective connection between the Failure of Foucauldian Urban Schooling and how it can lead to the Carceral City in a paper titled *Permissible School Violence* that he delivered to the Conference of the South Atlantic Philosophy of Education Society (2003):

In Foucault's *carceral* -- those institutions concerned with the behavioral control of recalcitrant populations -- political expediency and administrative convenience tend to override considerations of morality. But just consider how public schools, with their recalcitrant populations, i.e. normal children, have adapted to political expediency -- No Child Left Behind, Standards Testing, School Rankings-- and administrative

convenience, 7:30 AM school days, circuitous one-hour bus rides to school for kindergartners, Zero Tolerance policies. I fear that the ideology of Violence is Wrongdoing is a maneuver to distract us from seeing how the public school system fits into and expands the Great American Carceral. (Rozycki, 2003)

In an interview with David Barsamian of *Z Magazine* Noam Chomsky addressed the effects of urban schooling and prisons and the Foucauldian idea of a Carceral City was unwittingly in heavy sarcastic evidence:

You put them [low-income minority urban students] in prison because we're a civilized people and you don't send death squads out to murder them. But it's not in the rich, professional suburbs that kids are sitting on the streets. They have classrooms. They're not going to prison, either, even if they commit plenty of crimes. For example, the prisons are being filled by mostly drug-related crimes, usually pretty trivial ones....Prison construction is a state industry, and by now it's a fairly substantial stimulus to the economy....High-tech industry has for some years been turning to the idea of administering prisons with high-tech equipment, meaning supercomputers and (maybe some day) implanted electrodes and so on. I wouldn't be entirely surprised if we find that prison incarceration levels off and that more people are imprisoned in their homes. Because if you think about the capacity of the new technology, it's probably within reach to have surveillance devices which will control people wherever they are. (Barsamian, 1997)

There is hope growing against the Carceral City anchoring into mainstream America via the failed urban schooling Panopticon. To kill the Carceral City the Panoptic method of urban schooling must first be demolished. The in-power majority who are not labeled or disadvantaged

by birth or socio-economic position must rise up against the tenets of Panopticism in order to keep the full realization of the Carceral City a myth but time is running out. National ID programs, back-of-the-hand airport genital searches in the name of national security, foreign student special registration fees, primary color terror threat rubrics, GPS tracking of cellular phones and total city camera surveillance are all current in-place in-power majority systems that are building up the corners of the mainstream Carceral City from the edges of Panoptic urban schooling.

This gradual and obvious incarceration of America can only be stopped by embracing the disadvantaged who have been socially paralyzed by Foucauldian Urban Schooling and then welcoming them into the power majority without reservation. Promised morality-by-individual must then be centered in urban schools and then the warnings Foucault sounds in *Discipline and Punish* can finally begin to be laid to waste.

Hope for change is beginning to break along the horizon. Current trends in school architecture suggest a move away from the Panopticon-as-classroom. Teaching is more naturally flowing into smaller undefined spaces where groups of children gather with teachers with up to “twenty areas for teaching made available for specific tasks.” (Dudek, 2000) Those intimate spaces strike everyone away from the prison template school.

Another beam of hope will shine if America can imitate and then apply the Japanese style of teaching young children. The Japanese system is welcome working evidence against the Panopticonic system because kindergartens center on “free play, not academic instruction.... elementary schools emphasize kindness, collaboration and persistence – not test scores... students assume much authority... small groups are the heart of elementary school life.” (Lewis, 1995)

Catholic schools have also found success in addressing the problem of urban student schooling by reconnecting the teacher and student in a non-Panoptic dyad where reward and punishment are solely between teacher and student and the “gaze” is one of mutual respect and warmth. That methodology should find a larger favorable cause for change against the looming Carceral City. “Our analysis indicated that the minority gap is the largest in schools in which there is a high incidence of disciplinary problems. Thus the smaller minority achievement gap in Catholic schools is linked to the fact that these school environments are more orderly and less disruptive.” (Bryk *et al.*, 1993)

Education reform and urban improvement in cities like Newark are important harbingers of hope that suggest schools get better only when the city surrounding them thrives first. A Carceral City grows on the invisible status quo of the in-power majority. Demanding a reorganization of present urban management batters the gates of Panopticonic schooling and chips away at the core of the Carceral City. “Even the most successful school improvement that we can imagine, or that our tax dollars can buy, cannot lead to significant improvements in the lives of our cities and their residents without a concurrent economic policy aimed at overall urban improvement.” (Tractenberg *et al.*, 2004)

Voices in the majority knowledge/power group that shout dissent against the norm help heal the psychic moral damage caused by Foucauldian Urban Schooling. Cartoonist Matt Groening, creator of the popular Fox Television series *The Simpsons*, shouts for change from his base in the majority power core by mocking the current system with the stinging prick of humor (Hull, 2000) in his book *School is Hell*: “Why is school run like a jail? Why are there so many stupid rules? How come these desks are so uncomfortable? How come there is so much emphasis placed on rote memorization? How come we need permission to speak?” (Groening,

1987) The effect of Groening's groaning is one of snapping closed the Panoptic eye with self-deprecating laughter. Groening's work also engenders a hearty gewgaw of silliness that damages the foundations of a cryptic Carceral City that bases its entire existence on fear. Humor melts the Carceral City with tears.

Foucault's *Discipline and Punish* is more a warning against the unworkable majority status quo, especially when it comes to de-coding behavioral norms in urban schooling, than it is a universal blueprint for action or an epithet for change. Standing against the idea of the Carceral City is the responsibility of every citizen and that stand begins with the death of Panoptic urban schooling.

If Foucauldian Urban Schooling continues to fail without being demolished and replaced by a more democratic method of pedagogy everyone will end up evil-eyed by their electronically elected government and every movement will be labeled deviant and immediately punishable by the force of a mindless groupthink. That policy will shatter independent freedom of thought and movement while imprisoning every citizen within the stripes of the American flag as it ceases to freely flow in the wind like amber waves of grain. Purple mountain majesties will no longer be touchable by the mind or be viewable within the spirit of the Carceral City because the body politic will wither and America will become a place where even "the dead remain in danger" (Benjamin & Arendt, 1986) above the fruited plain.

## References

- Abcarian, R., & Klotz, M. (2002). *Literature, the human experience* (5th ed.). New York: St. Martin's Press.
- Anyon, J. (1997). *Ghetto schooling: A political economy of urban educational reform*. New York: Teachers College Press, Teachers College, Columbia University.
- Artaud, A., Schumacher, C., & Singleton, B. (2001). *Artaud on theatre* (Rev. ed.). London: Methuen Drama.
- Ayers, W., Dohrn, B., & Ayers, R. (2001). *Zero tolerance: Resisting the drive for punishment in our schools: A handbook for parents, students, educators, and citizens / edited by William Ayers, Bernardine Dohrn, and Rick Ayers*. New York: New Press: Distributed by W.W. Norton.
- Ballantine, J. H., & Spade, J. Z. (Eds.). (2004). *Schools and society: A sociological approach to education* (Second ed.). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth/Thomson Learning.
- Barsamian, D. (1997). Expanding the floor of the cage: An interview with Noam Chomsky. *Z Magazine*, 10, 2-3.
- Benjamin, W., & Arendt, H. (1986). *Illuminations*. New York: Schocken Books.
- Bentham, J. (1995). *The panopticon writings*. London: Verso.
- Blades, D. W. (1997). *Procedures of power and curriculum change: Foucault and the quest for possibilities in science education*. New York: P. Lang.
- Bourdieu, P. (1977). *Outline of a theory of practice*. Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Bryk, A. S., Lee, V. E., & Holland, P. B. (1993). *Catholic schools and the common good*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.
- Casella, R. (2001a). *At zero tolerance: Punishment, prevention, and school violence*. New York: Peter Lang.
- Casella, R. (2001b). *"being down": Challenging violence in urban schools*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Chambon, A. S., Irving, A., & Epstein, L. (1999). *Reading Foucault for social work*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Dudek, M. (2000). *Architecture of schools: The new learning environments* (2nd ed.). Oxford, Woburn: Architectural Press.
- Duncan, G. A. (2000). Urban pedagogies and the ceiling of adolescents of color. *Social Justice*, 27(3), 29.
- Durkheim, E. (1966). *Suicide, a study in sociology* (1st. Free Press pbk. ed.). New York: Free Press.
- Durkheim, E., & Halls, W. D. (1997). *The division of labor in society* (1st pbk. ed.). New York: Free Press.
- Education watch new jersey key facts and figures*. (2004.): Education Trust.
- Foucault, M. (1977). *Discipline and punish: The birth of the prison* ([1st American ed.]). New York: Pantheon Books.
- Giroux, H. (1999). Substituting prisons for schools: Beyond the politics of textuality. *Z Magazine*, April, 46-49.
- Giroux, H. A., & McLaren, P. (1989). *Critical pedagogy, the state, and cultural struggle*. Albany: State University of New York Press.



- Goodson, I. (2002). *Cyber spaces/social spaces: Culture clash in computerized classrooms* (1st ed.). New York; Houndmills, England: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Groening, M. (1987). *School is hell*. New York: Pantheon.
- Haberman, M. (2003). Who benefits from failing urban school districts? *EducationNews.org*: Education Writers Association.
- Hassard, J., & Rowlinson, M. (2002). Researching foucault's research: Organization and control in joseph lancaster's monitorial schools. *Organization*, 9(4), 615.
- Hull, M. B. (2000). Postmodern philosophy meets pop cartoon: Michel foucault and matt groening. *Journal of Popular Culture*, 34(2), 57-67.
- Ingersoll, R. M. (2004). *Why do high-poverty schools have difficulty staffing their classrooms with qualified teachers?* Center for American Progress and the Institute for America's Future.
- Johnson, T., Boyden, J. E., & Pittz, W. J. (2003). Racial profiling and punishment in u.S. Public schools: How zero tolerance policies and high stakes testing subvert academic excellence and racial equity. Retrieved October 15, 2004
- Lesko, N. (2001). *Act your age! A cultural construction of adolescence*. New York; London: Routledge Falmer.
- Levy, N. (2000). *Being up-to-date: Foucault, sartre, and postmodernity*. New York: P. Lang.
- Lewis, C. C. (1995). *Educating hearts and minds: Reflections on japanese preschool and elementary education*. Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Miller, J. (1993). *The passion of michel foucault*. New York: Simon & Schuster.
- Pettit, B., & Western, B. (2004). Mass imprisonment and the life course: Race and class inequality in u.S. Incarceration. *American Sociological Review*, 69(2), 151-169.
- Roberts, G. K., & Steadman, P. (1999). *American cities & technology: Wilderness to wired city*. London; New York, NY: Routledge in association with the Open University.
- Rozycki, E. (2003). Permissible school violence, 2003 *Conference of the South Atlantic Philosophy of Education Society*. University of South Carolina, Greensboro, SC.
- Schemo, D. J. (2004, November 29). Federal plan to keep data on students worries some. *The New York Times*.
- Sipe, P. (2004). Newjack: Teaching in a failing middle school. *Harvard Educational Review*, 73(3), 330.
- Skiba, R., Simmons, A., Staudinger, L., Rausch, M., Dow, G., & Feggins, R. (2003). Consistent removal: Contributions of school discipline: Harvard Civil Rights Project.
- Thompson, G. L. (2004). *Through ebony eyes: What teachers need to know but are afraid to ask about african american students* (1st ed.). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Tractenberg, P., Sadovnik, A., & Liss, B. (2004). *Tough choices: Setting the stage for informed, objective deliberation on school choice*. Newark: Institute on Education Law and Policy.
- Watts, I. E., & Erelles, N. (2004). These deadly times: Reconceptualizing school violence by using critical race theory and disability studies. *American Educational Research Journal*, 41(2), 2710299.
- Wright, R. (1995). *The moral animal: Evolutionary psychology and everyday life* (1st Vintage books ed.). New York: Vintage Books.