

WHITE PRESCRIPTIONS?

*The Dangerous Social Potential
for Ritalin and Other Psychotropic Drugs
to Harm Black Boys*



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society has historically seen as inferior. Through this initial effort, pharmaceutical companies have paved a road of gold for legislators and doctors to follow, leading to a financial nirvana. With legislative backing, together with the support of groups such as CHADD and the incompetence and greed of the FDA, the heads that wear the crowns belong to the pharmaceutical giants. The casualties that seem to be left in their wake include the millions of parents who are not conversant with the dangers inherent in giving mind-altering narcotics to children believed to have behavioral concerns. Actually, parents at times may be careless facilitators in this regard. Teachers, by contrast, are part of this onslaught due to their own frustrations, as well as their overt and covert racism in dealing with males of color, specifically Black school-age males.

The following chapter will explore the situation in an individual school district to show how such variables interact in a dangerous mix. Armed with information and theoretical knowledge about the social control of Black males, the reader will then be able to critically analyze what happens in this community and see that the White racial construct is actually kept alive in the current public school environment through the advocacy of administering psychotropic drugs to Black male children.

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Operation Control: Champaign, Illinois

Whenever I listen to Roger Waters masterfully belt out one of my favorite songs, "Another Brick in the Wall (Part 2)," my senses are jolted and transformed into an emotional vortex. Why do I have such a dramatic reaction to this piece? Perhaps it is because all the children I have worked with in the public education setting, with their many different and wonderful faces, pop out of my cabinet of memories and sprawl across the floors of my mind when I hear the lyrics. Regardless of my current state of mind or the tasks with which I have become inundated, the marginalized poor White children and others of color are always there in the corridors of my heart. Through this illustration, one may feel the need to interpret my experiences with these children as negative, but quite the opposite is true: the times spent with them were the most fulfilling moments of my life. With them, I was grounded in the truest reality of life. With them, I witnessed a beauty so pure and priceless that it was transcendent. This beauty was present in the stories they told, in the silly moments that made me laugh and smile, and most notably, in the times when I was lucky enough to be at hand when they were discovering and connecting the dots in relation to how the world around them operates. During these experiences, I was introduced to the real meaning of peace.

However, I was also present to witness their misery and uphill plights. During those dark times, I was severely affected, and I continue to be so even today. I suppose the pain and anger I feel emanates from the fact that these children were unable to defend themselves or

even recognize the full extent of their victimization at the hands of those entrusted by their parents to educate, care, and socially prepare them—the very people each parent hoped would help secure the future he or she dreamed of when first gazing upon the child's face.

The victimization that I am referring to is all too evident in the life of a boy named Danquell. For confidentiality, I have assigned him an alias. He was a first-grade Black student attending the first elementary school I worked in as a part-time social worker while I was finishing my studies for my PhD program. Danquell's school was in the midst of a transformation. Originally, it had been a magnet school, geographically located in the "Black part of town" in a top-ranked midwestern research university community. In comparison to other cities in Illinois, with the exception of Chicago, the community is ethnically diverse. Most of the parents in the school I am referring to, Elementary School X, were educated U.S. Whites and foreigners from far-off places such as South Korea, Eastern Europe, and China. The majority of the parents in this population were attending graduate school in the community, hoping to either go back to their homeland or leave the community for a more promising future elsewhere in the United States. Demographically speaking, the school was topped off with a numerically light sprinkling of Black children from within the community. In fact, I myself had been among the sprinkling of children from the community who attended the school in my kindergarten year during the 1970s.

By the time Danquell was attending Elementary School X, however, due to a federal mandate in the 1990s, which will be discussed in detail later in this chapter, the school's demographics began to look quite different from anything the school had known in the past. The school district administration decided to get rid of the magnet school label, which caused most of the diverse foreign and middle-class to upper-class Whites to take flight to other schools within the district, leaving Elementary School X to an increasing Black population.

Happily welcomed in my opinion but unannounced and unexpected by others, Hispanic/Latino people were settling in the community in substantial numbers. In the past, the Hispanic/Latino population in the area fluctuated seasonally due to the production needs of nearby farmers. Each year, as summer turned into fall, the migrant workers would leave, only to appear again the following summer. Now, however, this particular population was deciding to stay and make the area home, and Elementary School X was assigned to meet the educational needs of the young children of these Hispanic/Latino families. This assignment was due to the school's foreign language instruction and

also the misguided decision of the district administration to segregate this population to one school. (If they were included, Hispanic/Latino children began to share the classrooms with the growing number of Black students and the dwindling number of Whites who remained.)

A point to mention here is that when the school was transformed into the so-called choice plan, certain teachers in the building sent flyers to White parents that suggested they remove their children from the school and place them elsewhere; the choice plan, it was said, would be the downfall of the school, for it would bring an increase in the numbers of children of color in the student body.

In my years as a part-time social worker in the building, teachers and even the school social worker, all of whom were supposedly trained to work for the marginalized and speak to social justice, routinely noted in a negative manner that the school "looked a lot different." The school principal in 2007 was quoted by a former coworker as saying that she felt the school was getting "too dark" for her taste. These staff members were reacting not only to the "darkening" of the school but also to the socioeconomic and cultural changes that had taken them by surprise. With these changes, most of the staff had to internally recognize (but simultaneously publicly ignore) their own social and emotional disabilities in being inadequately prepared to teach these diverse students and have empathy toward them; many also did not have a basic understanding of the cultural plight these peoples faced in the United States. All these factors affected the students' relationship with the public education system and those deemed to be teaching professionals. Soon, the school saw a large increase in the number of students being presented for special education testing and discipline issues. This trend was an unfamiliar one for the school, something it had not experienced when the student body was composed of more Whites and foreign students. In essence, the school and its staff were caught off guard: they were unprepared and/or unwilling to deal with these children and the challenges they faced in fitting into a building and educational system that had historically denied them access.

In terms of little Danquell, due to the emotional effect he had on me, I wrote down the following story quickly after an encounter we had one fall afternoon. On that day, I was leaving at noon through the lunchroom. I noticed Danquell and was struck by the look of anger and frustration on his dark-skinned, smooth, dry little face as he aggressively fingered the insipid and awful looking pizza on his tan plastic tray, as if it had done something horrible to him. Through his unfeigned body language, it was apparent that he did not want to

socially interact with anyone. Danquell had occupied a special place in my heart ever since I learned of his single mother's ill treatment of him in comparison to the loving care she directed toward his sisters, which was all due to her current relationship with the girls' father. That day in the lunchroom, I decided to throw caution to the wind and engage in a conversation with Danquell. I sat down at an empty place across from him at the lunchroom table.

"What's wrong, little Brother?" I asked. He looked up with so much rage in his crystal brown eyes; at the same time, though, I saw a sadness wanting to escape in the form of a tear. But at an early age, he had learned that crying, to some, was a sign of weakness. Therefore, he fought the urge to give in to the need for tears, which resulted in him defaulting to his secondary line of emotional expression—anger. Through clenched teeth, he said, "She always pickin' on me and never listening to me when I have sometin' to say." "Who?" I asked him. "My teacher," he responded. Attempting to play devil's advocate in a nonconfrontational fashion that would allow me to secure his continued trust in me, I asked him if he had tried in a positive way to capture his teacher's attention. "Yeah! She still acts like she don't like me. She always actin' like she hear White folks in class, but not the Black boys."

Sitting next to me at this moment was a Black female classmate, whom I will call Demetria. She got in on the conversation between spooning her syrupy, brownish peaches and picking the cheese off her pizza. She quickly said, "Yeah, she always treatin' all the Black kids like . . . Bad." Danquell's best friend, James, who was a Black male in special education, fired back simultaneously, "She don't treat the Black girls like us!" Danquell went on to add, "You get more attention than us. I know somethin' ain't right for us cuz we Black boys." Even with his limited articulation skills and his brief experience with school, this first-grade student was able to express something he had internalized, something that other Black males with more experience realize and battle—Black males are treated much differently than their White counterparts and even, to a larger and varying degree, Black females.

During the sixth century BC, in *The Art of War*, Sun Tzu intuitively wrote, "All warfare is based on deception. Hence, when able to attack, we must seem unable; when using our forces, we must seem inactive; when we are near, we must make the enemy believe we are far away; when far away, we must make him believe we are near. Hold out baits to entice the enemy. Feign disorder, and crush him." The deception propagated by public education is the notion that equality

exists for all students regardless of their racial or genetic makeup. All children have the freedom and opportunity to excel through the fields of education, for the fields are rich with opportunity—right?

In the past, separate but equal was the tactic. In reality, everything was separate, but things were never equal. Today, one of the many deceptions is masked by the formal and informal labeling of Black males as emotionally disordered, as special education students, and/or as students with ADD and ADHD. The war is being waged across the country, which we can see if only we look at what is happening in U.S. public school buildings today. It is evident in the numbers of Blacks, specifically Black males, who are in special education. It is present in the Black male dropout, expulsion, and suspension rates. The Black students are found, categorized, classified, and thus controlled. And in the process, as the reins are pulled tightly around their proverbial necks, Black school-age males are finding it extremely difficult to gasp for air.

Through my research in the Illinois school district, I was granted the opportunity to complete my dissertation in the same school system where I had spent most of my formal school years. In that setting, I was allowed to look for occurrences of this deception in education, designed to crush and control Black male academic and social progress. This was also the same school system that I worked for as a social worker and as the first special education/assessment coordinator for the district. In this locale, I was able to witness the deception of supposed equality through social interactions and with data acquired through student records. Once I had burrowed under the deception, what I saw was nothing but forms of covert racism, oppression, and control directed primarily at Black males—all of which were by-products of the racism that has been embedded in the foundation of public education. In that school setting, I was able to witness the unequal treatment involved in pushing boys into special education and later onto psychotropic medications. But specifically and even more troubling was the disproportionate number of Black males being targeted by a system composed mainly of White teachers, school psychologists, and social workers and by administrative policies and procedures that did not aid them but instead victimized them due to the perception that such Black males are unsalvageable and unworthy. Consciously or not, this situation is occurring, as prior chapters indicate, across the United States.

To illustrate the oppression being directed toward Black males in Champaign, I will first discuss the Unit 4 public schools' techniques

to control and exert power over this population through the special education process and the attempts to shackle these students with Ritalin and other psychotropic medications. The following sections describe findings on this issue as derived from the data collected from the district. But first, I must sketch the backdrop to the community and its issues related to racism, public education, and perceptions of control and oppression from both the dominant White population and the Black people in the setting who remained silent about it.

INEQUALITIES IN EDUCATION: CHAMPAIGN, ILLINOIS

Champaign is nestled in central Illinois. When one hears “central Illinois,” images of small-town life come to mind. But Champaign is surprisingly different. Yes, there are neighboring towns that border cornfields, beanfields, and more cornfields. But essentially, the community itself has much in common with larger metropolitan centers. It is approximately two and a half hours from Chicago (depending on the time of year and the unpredictable traffic); three hours from St. Louis, Missouri; and almost two hours from Indianapolis, Indiana. In 2007, Champaign held a special census that indicated the city had approximately 75,254 citizens, which is a 7,702 increase over the U.S. Census in 2000. The population of the school district is racially and socioeconomically diverse.

The area is notable and most recognized for the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (UIUC). In the areas of education and research, the university is nationally and internationally recognized. The institution attracts the best students from across the United States and even around the globe, and it consistently ranks well in the *U.S. News & World Report* surveys. UIUC is a demographic bridge between Champaign and Urbana (the sister twin cities). Positive economic and population trends are enhanced by new businesses moving into the area. For instance, the university has helped to attract the likes of Motorola and Yahoo. As for the adjoining city of Urbana, the 2005 U.S. Census indicated the population there was 38,463. The school district in Urbana has one prekindergarten facility, six elementary schools, one middle school, and one high school. To an outsider of Champaign-Urbana, it is difficult to distinguish where one begins and the other ends. But to insiders and people born and raised there, a difference is easily seen in the tempo of life and in those who populate the areas. In Urbana, a largely liberal atmosphere exists,

so it should be no surprise to learn that a majority of the university faculty reside there.

When my research was initially completed, the school system in Champaign served approximately 9,400 students. It is currently composed of one prekindergarten site, eleven elementary schools, three middle schools, an alternative education setting (which consists of middle and high school students), and two high schools. According to their official school district Web site, the powers that be within the public school setting have declared beliefs and a creed in recent years and have adopted a mission statement that reads: “The mission of the Champaign Unit #4 School District, in partnership with the community, is to guide all students in gaining knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary to direct their lives, improve a diverse society, and excel in a changing world by providing dynamic, resource-rich learning environments and experiences in which people and lifelong learning are valued.”¹ Despite its creed and documented beliefs in the value of individuals, as well as its understanding of cultural diversity and its importance to society, the district has for many years had racial conflict surrounding the quality of education that the school system has offered to its students of color.

Having been born and raised in the setting, I can provide testimonials as to what Champaign looked like in the past and what it looks like today as seen through the eyes of a person of color. My mother moved to the area in 1969 once her family migrated from the Deep South. On many occasions, she and other family members told stories of how Champaign was segregated in living, social, and schooling arrangements in those days. Other commentary was provided by an elder Black woman, Hattie Paulk, better known as “Ms. Hattie,” who is widely respected and admired in the community and has been a part of the local landscape for her entire sixty-six years of life. Through interviews in 2007—or “history lessons,” as she called them—she confirmed what my mother and others in my family had mentioned. She even added more of a colorful description of the community for me.²

She described how the lines of segregation were drawn geographically by a set of major train tracks that still operate on the North Side of Champaign. On many occasions, I had been stuck waiting for the unpredictable, slow trains that halted traffic for what seemed like hours, but I had never before realized that junction in town was a historical divider between two worlds—Black and White. There were actually two sets of project-living residences at one time as well. One was designated for Whites on the White side of town, and the other

was populated by Blacks on the North Side: even in poverty, living arrangements were segregated. Through further discussions with Ms. Hattie, I learned about the existence of Black-owned businesses, hotels, restaurants, grocery stores, and drinking establishments for Blacks that were primarily located on this side of town. In fact, Elementary School X was initially a Black-only school. It was not until the early 1970s that it was transformed into a magnet school, excluding the previous large population of neighborhood Black kids and including by and large the offspring of university professors, international university students, and other elite White populations in Champaign. Historically, those Blacks who attended the university were designated to live off campus across the train tracks on the North Side as well. Even the famous Jesse Jackson experienced a taste of segregation on the campus during his one year of attendance at the University of Illinois. Later, he transferred to Greensboro's North Carolina Agricultural and Technical College, a mostly black institution, which does not come as a surprise.

Today, in the twenty-first century, I can affirm that Blacks are no longer obliged to live on the North End as described earlier. But it would be reckless of me to not acknowledge that some things remain the same. In terms of race, critical thinkers and conflict theorists such as myself would pose the question— isn't that always the case? Regardless of the diversity the University of Illinois brings to the surrounding area of Champaign, racism is still experienced by many people of color in the area. One example among many can be found in the controversy over the recent removal of the mascot known as "the Chief."³ One would think that racism on a large, diverse campus would be almost invisible in these times. However, it is apparently alive in the hearts of those, mainly Whites, who wear pro-Chief outerwear, threaten to use violence, and articulate racist ideological rhetoric against people who oppose their own position. It is alive among those who refuse to empathize with Native Americans who feel dehumanized while watching a White male dance erratically to a made-up dance while wearing an unauthentic outfit. Blacks who see footage of Blackface routines on television experience this same sense of dehumanization.

De facto segregation continues to occur in the living arrangements of Whites in Champaign. As the community has grown and expanded, Champaign has developed miniature suburban areas that are predominantly populated with middle- to upper-class Whites. In these areas, mainly Whites live in homes worth from \$300,000 to upwards of \$1 million in places where nothing but cornfields and beanfields

existed when I was growing up. "Ivory Colored Houses," as Ms. Hattie called them, are literally puzzled together in rapidly forming, inclusive housing divisions with such names as "Clearview" and "Liberty on the Lake." One particular subdivision, "Jacob's Landing," has caused some controversy throughout Champaign because a number of billboards advertising homes in the community have a picturesque White family posed in front of a large home. Above the smiling family is the statement, "Champaign Homes, Mahomet Schools."⁴ To those living in the area, the message simply implies that one could live in this area and pay lower taxes in comparison to Mahomet, a mainly White town, but at the same time allow one's children to attend a school district that is almost all White. These newly constructed residences even have colorful street names, such as "Supreme Court." In recent years, the miniature suburban areas have encircled themselves with small shopping areas and established new bank branches, coffee shops, restaurants, and business offices away from the heart of the city. All these entities have purposely been built near their places of residence—within their walls.

There is something ironic about all these community expansions and all the efforts to build a community within a community, given the geographic distances and the time it takes to move about the area. For though the community is increasing in population, Champaign is in no way Chicago or Los Angeles when it comes to travel. Why is there a need to separate or distance oneself through the expansion of the community? Undeniably, some people of color would certainly say it is due to the issues of racism that exist in the community and are also decoded in the school system. It has always been my belief that a public school system is a direct reflection of the issues that are socially bound within the surrounding community. Public schools are simply mirrors that reflect the economic, social, and racial relations within one's community. Heather Johnson and Thomas Shapiro (2003) presented some interesting findings in a chapter in *Whiteout: The Continuing Significance of Racism*. They sharply concluded through in-depth interviews with two hundred families in Boston, St. Louis, and Los Angeles that White parents' decisions about living and school opportunities for their children are based on race, which contributes to the social reproduction of social stratification. Further, they noted in their interviews with White parents that the participants exemplified racist attitudes in their explanations for their school and community living choices.

The majority of the interviews showed that White parents who chose to live in these settings correlated good schools and good

communities with Whiteness. Bad schools and bad communities translated to people of color, specifically Black and Brown families. Respondents feared Blacks and saw them as social threats to their own way of life. Moreover, it was noted that their housing choices in particular neighborhoods as related to schools were consciously acted upon due to their explicit racist belief system.⁵ This situation is not only sad but also ironic, given the growing body of literature suggesting that when students learn in desegregated schools, they grow into adults who are more at ease, accepting, and tolerant of people from different racial backgrounds.⁶

Further, this particular heavily White, middle- to upper-class population in Champaign has in recent years voiced a need for new schools to be built within their invisible borders. It is apparent by the location of these proposed schools that the need for better and newer schools is not directed toward all children but toward a specific White class of children. That most of these people covertly wish for their children to be separated from children of color is seen in the increasing number of these White children in parochial schools. Next, it is occurring in the Champaign school district. Consider, for instance, the policy that applies to sibling children in the district: when one sibling is tested and accepted into the gifted program (which has an almost completely White population) in a given school, the district policy dictates that his or her sibling will automatically go to the same school. This policy enables parents to keep their children on the same schedule, and it decreases transportation problems that normally arise when children in the same family go to different schools. The interesting point is that these gifted programs are available only in three different elementary schools in Champaign, all of which happen to be located in low-socioeconomic neighborhoods with a large number of Blacks. These schools are also heavily populated with Black and/or Hispanic/Latino children. Peers at these schools have reported that some parents opt out of the program when they realize that one of their children will be in a segregated White gifted classroom, but their other nongifted child (or children) will be forced to share a classroom with non-White students; these parents choose to keep all their children at a school near their home that does not have a large number of children of color from low-socioeconomic backgrounds.

During the 2007–2008 academic year, four elementary schools had gifted classrooms: B. T. Washington, Garden Hills, Dr. Howard, and Stratton. In these settings, children of color are isolated from the mainly White gifted children. Therefore, segregation is occurring within

integration. The ratio of Black to “other” students⁷ in the four classes at B. T. Washington was 2 to 8, 1 to 10, 1 to 9, and 3 to 10. At Garden Hills, the ratio of Black to White students in the gifted classrooms was 1 to 12, 3 to 30, 2 to 18, and 0 to 11. Dr. Howard’s ratio was 2 to 23, 3 to 22, 3 to 19, and 1 to 20. Finally, Stratton, which is a newer building created through an agreement between the community and school district, located on the north side of town, had ratios of 3 to 17, 3 to 17, 6 to 14, and 4 to 18.

Over the years, issues in the Unit 4 School District have included the lack of a fair and unbiased climate for Black students, particularly in terms of cultural understanding and willingness to empathize; unfair discipline procedures; and placement into special education and alternative education sites (such as psychiatric schools and general equivalency diploma [GED] programs). In addition, the Unit 4 School District was accused of underrepresenting Blacks in gifted education, which reflects a lack of effort in the hiring of faculty of color and in the placement and retention of Black teachers and administrators. When looking at special education specifically, the disproportionate presence of Black students in comparison to their White counterparts continues. For example, during the 2006–2007 academic year, Blacks made up approximately 51 percent of the special education population even though they only comprised 37.5 percent of the overall student population in the district.

In the early part of the 1990s, the district was officially under legal attack due to alleged racial inequalities. On behalf of local community members, a complaint was filed with the Department of Education’s Office of Civil Rights (OCR) in regard to the issues discussed previously. For some odd reason, instead of continuing to sue for damages and thus forcing the district to publicly acknowledge its historical wrongdoing vis-à-vis people of color due to the federal charges filed, all the parties to the suit established a series of agreements that would address the issues raised by OCR and the representatives of the initial charges. In the area, this agreement is known as “the consent decree,” and it has caused many feathers to be ruffled, mostly among the Whites of the community. Many feel the decree was unwarranted and unnecessary, for they have not and to this day do not see the racial infractions that have punished Black children in the past and into the present time. This sentiment is expressed weekly on a local blog called “IllinoisPundit.com,” which was established in January 2005. The blog allows for so-called concerned community members to express their feelings about the issues that affect the Unit 4 School District. The comments at

times reflect overt and covert racial beliefs. For instance, on December 14, 2007, in reference to the issues of the consent decree, an Internet blogger named Gregg noted, "We don't have actual problems in our schools. It's just there are so many stupid parents." On the same day, John E. Maloney posted a comment that read, "The consent decree that cost so much money was counterproductive and was not worth the cost."

The agreement between the plaintiffs and the school district instituted the choice plan in September 1997, which allowed parents to choose to send their children to any school as spaced allowed. But the schools had to remain racially balanced for them to be in compliance with the federal mandates. So, if the parents' preference is for school X, their child's ability to enroll in the school would depend on whether the student's assigned racial identification category is already at a maximum level there. To deal with this dicey political issue, the Family Information Center was established to "centralize the student assignment process and assist parents in making informed decisions about the schools they would like their children to attend." In reality, due to the constrictions of the mandate, "choice" was really a myth, for parents did not have the final say as to where their children were to attend, unless they were upper class.

In my experiences with the district and my discussions with anonymous staff members who were privy to documented information and interactions with particular administrators, I heard on many occasions that new citizens of the area, possibly affiliated with the university and/or its lucrative football program, or prominent businesspeople in the community somehow would end up at the top of the list for the most desired schools, which happened to be less populated with Black or Latino students. These individuals would seem to effortlessly circumvent the process, with no concern for the ramifications of their actions. But this was Champaign-Urbana, and as in many other communities across the country, money and connections equated to social advantage.

In 1998, the treatment of and opportunities afforded to Black students in the district were addressed through an education equity agreement. In order to ensure that Black students had access to a high-quality education, a resolution agreement was reached by Unit 4 and the OCR; it included a mandated school climate study to examine the racial culture of the community and address the remedies needed in the public school setting. The climate study, which I utilized to understand the community, included a survey of district parents,

designed to identify problems with district programs as perceived by parents, staff, and students in terms of the inequality felt by Black students and faculty.

I was not personally allowed to investigate and discuss the notion of racism and oppression through interviews with parents, teachers, and students. Being affiliated with the university as a graduate student, a researcher has to go through a few protocols to make sure that his or her research is ethically okay to pursue. Simply put, safeguards are in place to ensure that no harm comes to those being studied and investigated. Also, one has to gain access not only to records but also to a sampled population of people the researcher wants to investigate or observe, and/or with whom the researcher hopes to discuss issues of relevance to the study.

In the present case, one might ask, why did I not look to the people for their notions of what was occurring as it related to the topic at hand? Why did I not get into the field and personally interview the children, parents, certified school personnel, administrators, and others in order to enrich the study? Actually, that is a simple question to answer—I was not allowed to do so due to fear on the part of the school district. In my naïveté and with my lack of experience in the politics of public education, I freely and overtly asked for access to these people. My immature thinking at the time led me to assume that since "we" were all there in the interests of children, access to information that would enable a better understanding of a possible injustice would therefore be valued and appreciated by all educators. But the historical treatment of people of color in combination with my findings indicates evidence of oppression. Therefore, those in charge of maintaining the status quo opted for social blindness. Memmi (2000) noted that "racists are people who are afraid. . . . Generally it is because one wishes to obtain or defend something of value. . . . The necessity to defend an individual identity and a collective identity, against all who come from elsewhere and don't belong, is in operation."⁸ Therefore, my investigation may have been seen as an offensive measure against an identity already under investigation for racist practices. During my investigations, I was told in so many words that the nature of my study was touching on race, an issue no one truly wants to discuss or confront, and I was not allowed access through the local school district to pursue my interests. The school system made it clear that my topic was too racially explosive, especially at a time when racial tensions and federal mandates had to be dealt with. Therefore, I first chose to determine the perceptions

of the Unit 4 school system through the use of the documented findings of the 2001 School Climate Surveys.⁹

The official study focused on how the Unit 4 school climate was perceived by students, staff, and parents. Groups were divided by hue—Whites and Blacks. No other grouping was taken into account, apparently because of the relatively low numbers of other racially identified groups in the school system. (At that time, the Hispanic/Latino population had yet to produce a spike in demographics.) The use of the surveys was prompted by the documented racial inequities in the district; particular attention was focused on the examination of how racism and issues related to race affected school climate as perceived by the participants. Using the results of the climate survey aided my assertions that the barriers of racism and social control are overtly apparent and consequently drastically affect the academic achievement of Blacks, specifically Black males, in the public school system, as was illustrated in earlier discussions. The racism and social control also lead to the labeling practices applied to this population in special education and, as a result, to medicating them due to the conflicts and perceptions Whites in public education have in regard to Black males.

The climate surveys that were utilized to gauge the perceptions of fairness, cultural understanding, qualities of desegregated schools, and perception of “need for a change” through interviews with White and Black parents, teachers, and students in the Unit 4 School District were forged by the University of Illinois, under the direction of Mark Aber, PhD, in 2001. Under his guidance, the School Climate Research Team (SCRT) was created, which later tailored the survey through dialogue with numerous community members concerned with the issue of racial inequality in the local school system. Their concerns were reflected in the themes and questions of the survey that was eventually administered to teachers, parents, and students in the Unit 4 public schools. Moreover, this survey was conducted to clarify the relationship between Whites and Blacks in the Unit 4 school system in Champaign, Illinois, with respect to their understanding and experiences of racism and oppression in the policies, procedures, and interactions with school officials. As Daniel Solorzano and Dolores Bernal (2000), argued, the use of qualitative inquiry generates a better understanding for a particular phenomenon and the participants' views and experiences involved, and it improves the base of knowledge in reference to the subject matter for further research. The SCRT team utilized the following tools: School Climate Survey Parents Version

(SCSPV), School Climate Survey Staff Version (SCSSV), School Climate Survey Elementary Version (SCSEV), and School Climate Survey High School Version (SCSHSV) as multidimensional assessment tools to measure the groups' perceptions of the schools' social climate. The surveys were composed of seven to eight demographic questions. Additionally, the questionnaire allowed respondents to indicate whether they strongly agreed, agreed, were neutral/not sure, disagreed, or strongly disagreed with each of seventy-six statements. Seventy-five percent of all Unit 4 school building staff members, 35 percent of all Unit 4 parents, and 90 percent of students in the third through twelfth grades were the respondents. This study was built upon the findings of Robert Peterkin and James Lucey's Educational Equity Audit.¹⁰

In relation to my study, the impact of institutional racism, classism, and sexism on Black males in Unit 4 can best be illustrated through the climate study because, in essence, the voices of the people are embedded within the data drawn from the initial climate research. The tool of analysis strived for an adequate interpretation of the particular observation of the sample population.¹¹ The following section describes the results of the climate study that contributed to the analytical aspects of my own research. Given the results, it seems that my mother, certain elderly family members, and Ms. Hattie were on target in their perceptions ranging from the 1950s to the beginning of the twenty-first century. As they told me, “Being Black in America means that time does not move.”

Rather than reciting a string of numbers and statistical details, I would briefly state that through the SCRT, we can begin to measure the climate in which these incidents or perceptions of racism occur in this diverse community, among both people of color and Whites. It also permits us to witness how the racism continues to be seen by those it inherently targets even as the benefactors of this racism remain blinded to and consciously ignorant of its existence. Simply stated, the results of the surveys reveal that Black and White parents generally agreed in the areas of influence, trust and respect, school-parent contact, the importance and encouragement of parental involvement, and the barriers to parent involvement—all of which should be of no real surprise.

But in looking more critically at the results relating to a need for change, racism, discipline, and so on, the researchers observed that two different perceptions of the racial climate in the community and school district existed. First, there was a significant disparity between White and Black views in regard to general fairness, cultural

understanding, the qualities of desegregated schools, and a need for change. On the one hand, White parents, staff, and students in the sample reported that they saw Unit 4 schools as being fair in terms of how all children were treated, regardless of race and socioeconomic backgrounds. Blacks, on the other hand, were less likely to agree that there was an acceptable degree of fairness in the schools. Second, White parents and staff in the district were more inclined to feel there were instances of cultural understanding occurring in the classrooms between Black and White high school students. Next, in regard to the qualities of desegregated schools, few White staff members perceived the importance of teaching cultural sensitivity, hiring a proportionate number of Black staff members and administrators, and including Black perspectives in the learning material and curricula. This reported perception countered that of Black parents and staff members. Fewer Whites than Blacks felt that the district was in need of change in relation to the racial disparities revealed in the Peterkin and Lucey Educational Equity Audit.

In terms of racism and Black student discipline concerns, importantly, it was reported that a fear of Black students existed in the middle and high schools. A vast majority of parents and staff felt that adults did not fear Black students, but they noted that White students feared their Black counterparts. Students of both racial backgrounds felt that they saw more fear from staff and students alike. The survey results revealed that there was a disparity in relation to the presence of institutional racism and oppression toward Black students. In essence, Whites in general believed that racism was not a factor, whereas Blacks believed it was present in the local Champaign school system. Finally, in relation to reasons for discipline problems among Black students, White staff and parents believed that such issues occurred due to “a failure of parents to adequately value and stress the importance of education. These respondents also tended to believe that most problems labeled as racial problems in the district were more due to poverty than to race, and they tended to disagree that a better understanding of students’ ethnic backgrounds by teachers and principals would reduce disciplinary problems at school.”

In summary, the largest and most enveloping racial differences among the participants were seen among school staff. Black staff and middle school students tended to perceive the racial climate more negatively than all the other groups involved. Once again, however, White staff members’ perceptions tended to be polar opposites in relation to this issue. Next, in relation to staff members, eighteen of

the nineteen measures utilized highly indicated that overwhelmingly Black staff members perceived the climate more negatively than their White peers. For all sampled groups, the largest differences in perceptions appeared on the following climate dimensions: general fairness, disciplinary fairness, academic fairness, and cultural awareness. Black parents were more likely than Whites to believe that the schools were unfair and to perceive a need for change in the Unit 4 district to address racial inequities with students and in hiring practices for the staff.

All groups in the study revealed that they did not witness or experience overt forms of racism. However, Black students, parents, and staff noted that racism existed. Specifically, significantly more students (especially middle and high school students) than adults reported having experienced racism “monthly” or on a more frequent basis. The differences in perception of the climate affecting Black students by White staff and parents in the community resonate with Eduardo Bonilla-Silva’s (2003) observations as he states that color-blind racists, such as those Whites in Champaign, ignore past and contemporary discrimination by framing the issue within a “naturalization” explanation, which allows Whites to explain racial phenomena as occurring naturally. Bonilla-Silva contends that “whites have developed powerful explanations—which have ultimately become justification—for contemporary racial inequality that exculpate them from any responsibility for the status of people of color.”¹² Historical forms of racism such as forced segregation are more obviously associated with Whites’ overt racism, but today, observations noted by Blacks on the climate survey suggest that they have been transformed into concealed racism and oppression in an effort to disable Blacks in the education system. The political and judicial fights over factoring race into college admissions and public school seating decisions indicate just a fraction of the pervasive and persistent ideology that is seen today, in contradiction to the belief that racism no longer exists in the twenty-first century.

This climate study and the data that will be discussed in the pages ahead offer evidence that racism, oppression, and control, especially of Black males, have survived the tides of time to persist in the contemporary environment. Moreover, as Joe Feagin (2000) noted, since slaves were first stolen from Africa, Whites’ intent has not only been to physically enslave them through force. By creating a system that transcended the generations, the intent has also been to advantage Whites through the use of social and psychological control mechanisms that target people of color, subsequently holding them to their places

on the second-class rung on the White-constructed ladder of racial hierarchy.¹³ This situation exists throughout all major institutions in the United States, including education.

The disparities between Blacks and Whites shown through the Climate Survey are reflected in the dismal findings for Black students reported by the audit in terms of academic achievement and punishment of Black students, especially Black males. In a clearly divided community where minority parents, students, and teachers all feel that their culture is not relevant to their White counterparts, a form of resistance has occurred among Black students. This has translated into low academic achievement and thus forces a culturally insensitive district to mete out punishment at a disproportionate rate, as illustrated in the Peterkin and Lucey Educational Equity Audit.

Moreover and simultaneously, a kind of “backlashing” against these forms of resistance occurs through the labeling of Black students, especially Black males, in the special education category of Unit 4 schools and through the introduction of psychotropic medications as a means of control. For example, specifically looking at B. T. Washington Elementary, the Building Support Team (BST) referrals for the academic years 2000–2001 and 2001–2002 comprised a total of thirty-six cases (not including students who had come before the committee more than once for referral). One hundred percent of those students having behavioral difficulty were Black males in the academic years between 2000 and 2002. More specifically, two of the four White males who had been referred were reportedly not “academically challenged” in their current grade levels, and their teachers or parents requested new, advanced grade placements. Hispanic and Asian students had been referred only due to English-language difficulties. Finally, Black males at B. T. Washington were disproportionately referred more than once for BST in terms of behavior and academics issues. In the comments made by classroom teachers on the BST process form, Black males were overly represented with comments such as “should be able to interact with others in a positive manner,” “not staying focused,” “poor attention,” “difficulty following the simplest direction,” and “not respectful to adults.” These comments were not present on forms for White and Hispanic students. In fact, as mentioned in Chapter 2, these are the key phrases that teachers use in reference to students they feel have ADD/ADHD. This trend has yet to decrease.

During my time on a committee that supposedly acts as a “check and balance” for this trend across the entire district, I have been involved in preparing the data that analyze the trend in relation to the

overrepresentation of Blacks among students referred for intervening strategies for behavior and/or academics, which more than likely leads to special education testing and classification. Specifically, during the 2006–2007 academic year, 52 percent of those presented to BST at B. T. Washington were Black. This fact is interesting, given that Black students only represented approximately 17 percent of the total school population at the time. In addition, a majority of that population was composed of Black males.

This phenomenon is not particular to B. T. Washington. Looking through my current work, I can see that this is going on across all campuses. For example, during the same academic year, I estimated that Blacks vastly outnumbered all other student groups in terms of behavioral concerns brought forth by school staff members during the BST process. In 2006–2007, 315 students with no prior special education involvement (which leads to being labeled) were presented to BST across seventeen campuses (prekindergarten to twelfth grade); 136 were non-Black students (43 percent), and 179 were Black students (57 percent). Black males drastically outnumbered all other groups in regard to being referred for behavioral concerns. Also in that year, 58 percent of Carrie Busey Elementary’s BST population was Black. Worthy of note, Blacks comprised only 44 percent of the school’s population. Throughout my four years of preparing the particular BST data sets, Black students continued to be sent to BST and tested for special education more than any other racial grouping in the district.

It would be unfair to say that the district had not attempted a series of strategies to alleviate this disparity. One of these measures was to increase the paperwork teachers had to fill out before referring students. This paperwork set out a strict line of procedures to be followed to ensure classroom strategies were attempted with the help of the administration and other staff members. Yet despite all the efforts, the number of Black students continues to increase. Specifically and overall, Black males continue to be brought to BSTs for behavioral concerns more so than their White counterparts. Thus, during the 2006–2007 academic year, 237 Black students were referred to BST compared to only 208 Others (this Other category includes all other non-Black student populations). Interestingly enough, Black students represented approximately 27 percent of the district. Specifically looking at the Black representation, a vast majority of the students being referred to BST were male.

This information clarifies one example of the resistance expressed by Black students and the countermeasures employed by the public

school system in relation to the behavioral and academic concerns of Black males. In terms of the backslashing I mentioned earlier, the labeling practices and use of medication observed in the seven schools clearly show this situation, which I will explore further. The pathway for control has been shown to be rooted within the area of racism. The noted differences are examples of racial residue or the reproduction of past attempts at control; the racism once expressed through overt measures has today been transformed to covert means. Moreover, the outlooks among Whites and Blacks in the Unit 4 community are microanalytical examples of the racial barriers that exclude the power and validity of the voices of the oppressed while maintaining a sense of ideological segregation that has increased the polarization and tension between Blacks and Whites—similar to what is occurring in public schools across the country.

The conflict and resistance to cultural understanding shown in the Climate Survey further aid elite White social groups in ensuring their power, while extending their status quo from opposing minority groups through their perceptions of the racial climate within the city. This allows for the fact that the treatment is nothing less than a continuation of the once overt treatment of Blacks that can be traced from the transplantation of slaves to Jamestown, Virginia, in 1619, through *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896) and the Jim Crow laws that proceeded from it, to the current covert but recycled ideological perceptions and behaviors vis-à-vis Blacks. Therefore, the slant on Black males in public schools among educators is directly connected to Whites' inherent and historical behaviors toward Black males.¹⁴ The Climate Survey and the BST referrals illustrate that the elite Whites continue covert segregation, campaigning for “separate but equal” while practicing, as in the past, contradictory methods of inequality in the public school setting through the use of special education. Consequently, the Whites' resistance and behavior in turn are met with Black resistance. This is evident in the number of Black male behavioral issues that were noted in the BST information at B. T. Washington Elementary School. Black males begin to cope with the disadvantages and stressors presented by the culturally ignorant and power-hungry LEA by conceptualizing and buying into what schools perceive them to be—academically and socially ill-equipped.

As the reins of power are held more tightly by Whites who refuse to confront the racial barriers and injustices in public school classrooms, Black males are increasingly speaking out through unwanted classroom behaviors and a rejection of the academic track. This, coupled with

racial ignorance on the part of White school staff members, begins to place Black children, especially Black males, on the pathway to special education and possibly the introduction of psychotropic medications. The next phase of my study presents an example of this occurrence as revealed in Unit 4 special education records. Even though I was not given permission to interview participants, I did have a chance to go through these files, though I was only given two weeks to do so. The information I discovered illustrated that Black males are forced into a form of segregation by being given the special education label. And later, they are influenced to seek prescriptions for psychotropic medications, in hopes of coping with the inability of staff members to adequately address the needs of children of color and confront their own racism and unwillingness to teach in an equitable manner.

THE SECRETS THEY HOLD:

UNIT 4 SPECIAL EDUCATION FILE REVIEW

The following data were tallied from 456 special education files obtained for review.¹⁵ Due to the findings of the Education Determination Conference (EDC), the process that officially labels special education students, the students were divided into three categories—academic, behavior, and physical disabilities. In the targeted school district and, in fact, in a majority of public schools across the country, educators feel that any disability that impedes a student's academic achievement, such as mental impairments and learning disabilities, should be categorized as an academic disability. In addition to these categories, if educators feel that a student's diagnosis of ADD and/or ADHD negatively affects his or her academic achievement, the student can then be included under the special education category of other health impairment (OHC), which is covered under Section 504. In the cases I studied, the categorization of behavioral disability was applied to students who also had behavior and academic issues. That such children are categorized with both academic and behavioral/academic disabilities reflects the fact that educators have difficulty determining which variable (that is, academic concerns or behavioral concerns) is the primary issue to address in service delivery. What is consistent between students in the two categories, academic and behavior/academic, is that the academic sample group does not have issues in terms of exhibited negative behaviors. Meanwhile, students with physical impairments were classified as simply having physical

disabilities, and students in special education were divided into two categories—those who were taking some form of psychotropic medication and those who were not.

The data indicated that 37 percent of Black males, 32 percent of White males, 17 percent of Black females, and 9 percent of White females in the sample files were labeled under a special education category in the sampled school system. Of the special education students, 31 percent of the Black males, 35 percent of the White males, 18 percent of the Black females, and 10 percent of the White females were in the category for academic reasons. But 67 percent of Black males, 14 percent of White males and Black females, and 5 percent of White females were labeled due to behavioral conflicts that impeded their academic achievement.

In terms of the reported rationales and numbers of special education students receiving a form of psychotropic medication, 34 percent of Black males, 34 percent of White males, 10 percent of Black females, and 12 percent of White females in the sample were currently taking such medication. The data revealed some interesting points for those students who were not receiving a form of medication before the EDC. As noted earlier, the federal government mandates that each child in the special education category must be evaluated by his or her LEA every three years. The data from the special education files showed that out of the sample group of Black males who were initially not taking any form of medication, 43 percent were introduced to medication at some point after their initial evaluation but before their first reevaluation three years later. Yet only 36 percent of White males who had never been medicated were taking medication in that same time frame. This finding may not seem too astounding—until one compares these percentages to the total Black representation in the district. When doing so, we see that Black males were disproportionately represented in comparison to their White counterparts. Of Black and White females in the sample who initially were not taking any psychotropic medication before being categorized as special education students, approximately 9 and 10 percent, respectively, were introduced to a form of behavioral stimulant during the three-year period before their reevaluation.

There were a number of files I was not allowed to review, which caused me to ask: what about the students possibly on 504 plans whom I missed because they were not officially included under the special education umbrella? What about the students who may have been pushed toward ADD, ADHD, or other behavioral diagnoses and

did not go through special education testing? These questions gave me a logical rationale to look at children who were using behavioral stimulants as reported by the Illinois Medicaid program. This enabled me to investigate the number of socioeconomically disadvantaged Black and White children who were prescribed behavioral stimulants. Even though this approach has been used previously in research on preschoolers by J. Zito, D. Safer, S. dosReis, J. Gardner, M. Boles, and F. Lynch (2000), the current study looked specifically at a larger number of medications, including some the earlier research overlooked, and it included children in more age ranges. In addition, the earlier researchers did not conclude that Blacks outnumbered Whites in the area of behavioral stimulant usage because, given the scope of their investigation, they did not look at the numbers in proportion to the Black and White population rates. That particular study examined the numbers in the November 2000 Medicaid report regarding the population of children in the state of Illinois. I have utilized more recent findings from both Illinois and Florida.

SILENCING THE POOR: MEDICAID REPORTS

I hoped to gain an understanding of the people of lower socioeconomic status who I felt would take advantage of the reduced or, in some cases, free psychotropic medication recommended by inadequate medical, psychological, school social work, and general school administration authorities in regard to Black males they deemed in need of medical control. To that end, I obtained data from the Bureau of Rate Development and Analysis of the Illinois Department of Public Aid. For the fiscal year 2001, there were approximately 1.8 million people eligible for public aid in Illinois; in Champaign, there were 12,724 eligible adults and 4,581 eligible children from birth to eighteen years of age. As noted earlier, numerous medications are used for controlling supposedly unruly and low-achieving students. I focused only on methylphenidate HCL (Ritalin), Prozac/Prozac Weekly, Wellbutrin/SR, Adderall, and Concerta. The data revealed that approximately 51,905 children in the state of Illinois were currently using one of these psychotropic medications and receiving aid to pay for the drug from the Illinois Department of Public Aid.

Most noticeable, of those eligible for public aid in Illinois, approximately 20 percent of Black males, 46 percent of White males, 15 percent of Black females, and 17 percent of White females were on

one of the five drugs mentioned. Within the Unit 4 School District in Champaign, approximately 895 children were prescribed methylphenidate HCL (Ritalin), Prozac/Prozac Weekly, Wellbutrin/SR, Adderall, or Concerta.

In Champaign, the data illustrated that 22 percent of Black males, 52 percent of White males, 9 percent of Black females, and 17 percent of White females from birth to eighteen receiving public aid funding were currently on one of these behavioral stimulants. Therefore, out of the 4,581 recipients up to eighteen years of age receiving public assistance, 20 percent were using one of these listed drugs. And this percentage would rise dramatically if other popular drugs were included.

The statistics show how the mode of achieving control through medication has reached beyond Champaign. It has encompassed the entire state of Illinois. And this situation is not unique to Illinois. With information from the Department of Public Aid in Florida, I was able to determine the number of children (birth to eighteen years of age) who were being provided funding for popular drugs such as Concerta, Ritalin, Ritalin LA, and Adderall XR. In 2006, a total of 16,028 Whites and 7,735 Blacks were given medical funding and purchased these psychotropic drugs. Specifically, 10,557 White males and 5,593 Black males under the medical coverage purchased these drugs.

The fact that millions of dollars are spent so that low-income parents can obtain these medications is a clear indication of the states' outlook on the issue, allowing those in the special education segment of public schools to push their agenda of control through the medical model discussed earlier. A vast amount of federal and state moneys is allotted in this manner, and the government officials seem to be letting this occur due to their trust in those deemed to be "experts," working in a field that views special education students as "sick" and in need of aid.

METHODOLOGICAL REPRESENTATION OF DATA

To fully understand the data reported, a methodological comparison must be made to highlight the underlying theme in the findings. First, as stated in the previous chapter, the "multifocal" approach of Young (1999) that I used in this study relied heavily upon the works of Samuel Bowles and Herbert Gintis (1976), James Scheurich (1994), and Jamie Grinberg and Elizabeth Saavedra (2000). More specifically, the use of the critical race theory (CRT) was described in relation to

the described topic. First, by looking through the data in the climate study, we see the discrepancy between Blacks' and Whites' perceptions of racial disparities in regard to the academic achievement of the students in the Unit 4 School District community—an example of the conflict paradigm. Moreover, the information in the study indicates that Whites, unlike Blacks, did not feel that the racial tension surrounding the achievement gap, the hiring and firing of Black staff members, the curriculum, and the cultural awareness of Blacks needed to be confronted by the local education agency. This clearly illustrates, as Bell (1980) stated, that the powerful Whites only act on issues that are particularly beneficial to their own power structure.¹⁶ In fact, the tensions within Black teachers, Black parents, and, more important, Black children lead to the issues discussed in B. T. Washington's BST referrals. Because the concerns of the less powerful minority population are not adequately addressed, the model predicts both that White elites will hold on to their power through ignoring minority voices and that Black students will employ "counterattack" techniques or forms of resistance acted out as unwanted behaviors. The behavioral issues that arise will then prod teachers, administrators, and, to an extent, parents into believing that medications need to be prescribed in order to combat an invisible disorder. In fact, the cause of the behavior is actually believed to reside in the Black males, not in the workings of the public school setting. Therefore, the academic underachievement of Black males will continue without proper intervention, as noted in previous chapters, from the institution of education and our governing bodies.

Second, genealogically, the findings from special education files and Medicaid reports indicate areas in which the CRT can be used to gain a full understanding of the special education categories and medication issues described previously. For instance, the data showing that Black males in the sample schools were placed with high frequency in academic and/or behavioral special education categories, in comparison to their non-Black peers, clarifies the sorting mechanism behind the data on medicating trends among the sample group. Moreover, even though White males composed a high percentage of those students receiving psychotropic medications, the reasoning for diagnosis and medication was quite different from that used with Black males. It was reported that Black males were disproportionately placed in special education and that they were receiving more behavioral stimulants due to behavior concerns, as opposed to academic concerns, than all other groups observed; the use of the CRT paradigm points to these findings

as another example of the privileged classes' ability to perpetuate inequality between themselves and Blacks. This in turn furthers the technique of convincing all groups of the level of inferiority of Blacks, especially Black males, while validating efforts to take advantage of the flaws of IDEA and Section 504 in order to control Black males. Such methods proceed to negatively affect the social, emotional, and academic well-being of Black males, who exhibit resistance in response to the racial intolerance and need to control that is embedded in the LEA policies, procedures, and labeling techniques.

Thus, these negative consequences continually force a marginalization of the issue concerning Black males in special education. Through this process, the consequences of falsely labeling Black males exert a number of dire effects upon them. The stigma of being labeled has been shown to relate to the rate of education downfall (for instance, suspensions) among Black males.¹⁷ As an example, within Unit 4 in Champaign, the growing numbers of Black males who are not conforming to their regular education settings are thus being placed in the Columbia Alternative Center. As of 2007–2008, fourteen students were present there (twelve Black and two White). Once again, it is Black males who mainly populate this alternative education facility in the district. Being a part of the Alternative Placement Committee for over five years, I can attest to the fact that 98 percent of the students being suggested for alternative placement by the schools are Black. And of this population, 90 percent are Black males. From my observations and teachers' peer accounts, the Black males displaced from regular education are labeled as underachievers and as a result are pushed into sterile educational soil fostered by teacher perceptions that these children are incapable students. During the 2007–2008 school year, specifically in January 2007, Blacks were the dominant group at the facility. The idea of integrating these students is only appealing for public schools where special education students are not disruptive to the status quo. Furthermore, as noted previously, those students labeled with mental impairments are sometimes seen as "not quite human." This negative view of such students causes peers and teachers to socially isolate and sanction the actions of those deemed "not normal" in the traditional academic and social sense. Historically, the manner in which society has viewed those who are "abnormal" has fueled the rationale for their removal. This train of thought carries over into special education and thus not only removes these students and places them into alternative settings but also at the same time damages the self-concept of those who are removed. As self-concept

decreases, those labeled deviant conform to the negative depictions of them provided by teachers and administrators, through emotional and academic withdrawal in their school settings. Later in life, these students reap the effects of their deprived educational experience through dismal employment opportunities. The negative effects described here seem to call into question whether IDEA and Section 504 legislative intent actually discriminate against the Black students that they are claimed to protect.

The data reported on the medicating trends of Black males confirm that although the psychotropic medications are primarily given to White males, medication seems to be heavily used with Black males as a means of controlling unwanted behavior. This phenomenon occurs with the use of corporal punishment as well, as seen in James Gregory (1995). It has been shown that corporal punishment is used in a discriminatory manner.¹⁸ The data indicate that White males are, in fact, punished at a high rate in comparison to Black males but not in proportion in relation to the population as a whole. In this study, the number of Black males and White males being medicated for an academic or behavioral disability is analogous. But Black males, in proportion to their representation in the population, are being labeled in greater numbers than White males within the sample group. Indeed, the data reported by Jarvinen and Sprague (1995) show Black students' enrollment in special education classes is almost 50 percent higher than their representation in the public school districts investigated as a whole. The data from this sample, then, lead one to believe that for those who are labeled, especially with a behavioral component, behavioral stimulants are also possibly advised heavily by school officials and later prescribed by physicians in order to rid public schools of undesirable behaviors. In addition, the data presented show that the powerful White elites are allowing for the need to control males, and especially Black males, with an approximately \$5 million expenditure by the state of Illinois for psychotropic medications for the poor. Clearly, this fact points to the federal and state governments' role in allowing for millions to be spent on the issue of control. As noted previously, those advocates on behalf of special education students within and outside of government have permitted the continuation of policies that foster inequality and segregation.

The practices of labeling Black males and medicating them in order to assume a sense of control are based on ideologies founded on ignorance and fear. Historically, this has been noted in reference to the treatment Whites have imposed on Blacks, especially Black males.

From the beginning, these ideologies set up the reasoning for the two separate worlds of inequality, which have been illustrated through the data in combination with the historical and contemporary treatment of Blacks, specifically Black males.¹⁹ Social stratification and the implementation of the deficit model (essentially blaming the victim—that is, people of color—for their poor social state) are continued through the use of labeling and medicating special education and regular education students.²⁰ Regular and special education students continue to be divided due to the inherent nature of the doctrine of inferiority, even after the landmark decision *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954). Today, as seen before 1954, those students who are deemed unsalvageable are segregated, and the language of federal and state policies indicates that public schools are only required to meet the deficiencies of these students; public schools then proceed to do the minimum in providing a solid academic foundation. Due to the consequences of racism and ignorance, a false perception of Black students, especially Black males, occurs.

The data reported on the medicating trends of Black males confirm that though the psychotropic medications are primarily given to White males, they are heavily and disproportionately used with Black males as a means for controlling unwanted behavior. In comparison, a similar phenomenon has been documented with the use of corporal punishment, as noted in Chapter 1. Corporal punishment has historically been employed in a similar discriminatory manner, with Black males being punished at a disproportionately higher rate than White males.²¹ In this study, the numbers of Black males and White males being medicated for an academic or behavioral disability are nearly equal. However, Black males, in proportion to their representation in the population, are being labeled in greater numbers than White males in the sample group. The results of this should be considered in conjunction with the findings of Jarvinen and Sprague (1995), who stated that the Black student enrollment in special education classes in certain school districts was disproportionate to the number of Black males within the entire school districts and the DOE special education statistics in 2001. The data derived from this study, then, lead one to believe that those labeled, especially with a behavioral component, may also be heavily advised by school officials to use, and to be later prescribed by physicians, behavioral stimulants in order to rid public schools of undesirable behaviors. Clearly, this fact points to the federal and state governments' role in allowing for millions to be spent on the issue of control. As noted previously, the practice of labeling

and medicating males, more specifically Black males, is used in order to gain a sense of control. For Black males in particular, this form of control is based on ideologies founded on ignorance and fear of what Black males represent to Whites in general.²² Historically, this has been noted in reference to the past and current treatment Whites have imposed on Blacks, especially Black males. Social stratification is continued through the use of labeling and medicating special education and regular education students. Both sets of students continue to be divided due to the inherent nature of the doctrine of inferiority. This same practice is part of a cyclical process that was incorporated within the reasoning for the landmark ruling of *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1892) and *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954). Not much has changed in terms of the actual treatment of people of color. The oppressive and racist behaviors exhibited previous to *Brown* still exist in the policies and actions of public schools today. During the 2006–2007 academic year, the statistics relative to Blacks and specifically Black males continued to reflect the same trend as evident when this particular study took place. Given this observation, it is reasonable to assume that the push to medicate Black males who exhibit behavioral concerns to school staff and administrators is occurring as well.

Some will say that this need to control boys is nothing but a continuation of past patterns. It may be hard to fathom, but numerous drugs, such as Prozac and Klonopin or clonidine, are used to offset the occurrences of insomnia and mania that the aforementioned drugs have been shown to induce in children and teenagers. These drugs are similar to corporal punishment in that they are intended to control behavior that some within our society feel is unacceptable in today's schools and homes. Is there an underlying subconscious agenda, founded in the racial ideologies that gave rise to slavery, that has been transferred to all aspects of our modern society through teachers and school administrators, with the aim of conforming controlling male behavior, previously accomplished through the use of corporal punishment?

6



Conclusion

In every child who is born, no matter what circumstances, and of no matter what parents, the potentiality of the human race is born again: and in him, too, once more, and of each of us, our terrific responsibility toward human life; toward the utmost idea of goodness, of the horror of terror, and of God.

—James Agee

All of the issues mentioned in previous chapters that relate to children of color—specifically Black males with or without special education labels whose parents are often duped and pressured by school officials, teachers, social workers, and school psychologists to medicate them with behavioral stimulants—fit well within a contextualized understanding that disability, race, and gender have all historically operated in our society as justifications for inequality.¹ The purpose of this book is not only to hypothetically discuss how the social reproduction of racism and social control inherited from the White racial frame exists; it is also to show how this process is continued in the use of behavioral psychotropic medications to control the unwanted behavior of Black school-age boys in Champaign public schools. As my investigation and reporting illustrate, the existence of psychotropic medication has become a vehicle for the social control of boys, but specifically Black school-age males, within our public schools. This technique of control and oppression is one among many methods of social control, hostile to Black males in particular, that have historically been used in the United States.

The previous chapters have illustrated how over time, any group of people who were not considered White and/or “normal” due to physical

and mental impairments has been viewed as disabled and attacked for their flaws in comparison to what it means to be an “appropriate” citizen in the United States. U.S. history has shown how Blacks, Eastern European immigrants, women, Native Americans, and Asians were all at one time seen as groups with particular disabilities (psychological, physical, and emotional) that warranted their exclusion from certain rights and privileges allotted to Whites.² But unlike the other groups mentioned, Blacks continue to be seen as disabled and “not normal,” an idea first enacted through the rationale and justification for slavery. The justification was supported via stereotypes depicting Blacks as lacking proper intelligence and morals and, at the same time, being delinquent and defective.³ I have given testimony on the manner in which Black males have also been—and continue to be—viewed as intellectually inferior and as a sexual and physical threat by Whites, particularly White males. Overall, many Whites and other non-Blacks today covertly view Blacks, specifically Black males, with a general disdain that has not faded over time.

Through the discussion of the current state of affairs in education and its relation to Black males, I have shown that the education system today remains a primary location for the reproduction of racism, control, and oppression. This is once again visible with the issues of special education, gifted programs, alternative education, expulsion and suspension rates, and especially the propensity to control Black males through the use of psychotropic medications. In an institution created by Whites for Whites and predominantly run by White teachers and officials, coupled with the systemic racism and persistent White racial frame that oppresses Black males, there is a high probability that oppression will occur. Further, I am in absolute agreement with Jawanza Kunjufu (1986), who has argued that public schools contribute to the historical and present genocide of Black males through the misuse of special education, tracking, and standardized examinations.

The specific circumstances surrounding the social control exercised through special education and other means in the Champaign school district are microexamples of the social reproduction of racism. The need for social control that is derived from the White racial frame prompts and refuels the policies, procedures, and general dealings with Black males in public education. Given the discussion of the Champaign school district in the previous pages, it can be strongly argued that the White frame as it relates to Black males is not an illusion but truth. The social reproduction of racism and social control in this specific school district has been passed down through generations as

dedicated to advancing responsible and ethical medical research practices; to ensuring that the human rights, dignity, and welfare of human subjects are protected; and to minimizing the risks associated with such endeavors.

35. Ibid.
36. Breggin, *Talking Back*, 22.
37. Neil Munro, "Brain Politics," *National Journal*, February 3, 2001, available at <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/medicating/readings/brainpolitics.html>.
38. Schlafly, "Can Court Order Kids?"
39. Moss, "Ritalin under Fire," 19.
40. James O'Leary, "An Analysis of the Legal Issues Surrounding the Forced Use of Ritalin: Protecting a Child's Right to 'Just Say No,'" *New England Law Review* 27 (1993): 1173–1209.
41. Moss, "Ritalin under Fire," 19.
42. James A. O'Neal and Amy P. Freestone, "California Anti-SLAPP Statute Defeats Drug Class Actions," *Defense Counsel Journal* 68 (2001): 485.
43. John Caher, "New York Ritalin Case Puts Parents, Courts, on Collision Course," *New York Law Journal*, August 18, 2000, available at <http://www.law.com/cgi-bin/gx.cgi/AppLogic+FTContentServer?pagename=law/View&c=Ar>; Karen Thomas, "Parents Pressured to Put Kids on Ritalin: New York Courts Orders Use of Medicine," April 22, 2001, available at <http://www.usatoday.com/life/health/child/lhchi193.htm>. See also Rick Karlin, "Ritalin Use Split Parents, School," 2000, available at <http://www.breggin.com/schools>.
44. Caher, "New York Ritalin Case."
45. Thomas, "Parents Pressured."
46. Caher, "New York Ritalin Case."
47. Ibid.
48. O'Leary, "Analysis," 1173–1209.
49. Ibid.
50. Ibid.

NOTES FOR CHAPTER 5

1. Champaign Unit 4 School District, "Welcome to Champaign Unit 4 Schools," December 2007, available at <http://www.champaignschools.org>.
2. Hattie Paulk, director of the Family Information Center in the Champaign Unit 4 School District, in discussion with the author, December 4, 2007.
3. The Chief was an athletic mascot that was removed during the 2006–2007 academic year due to the expressed belief that he was a representation of institutional racism against Native Americans.
4. Jacob's Landing, <http://onjacobslanding.com/>. The Web site does not contain the exact quote that appears on the billboard, but the picture displayed on the site is the one described within this section of the chapter.
5. Heather B. Johnson and Thomas M. Shapiro, "Good Neighborhoods, Good Schools: Race and the 'Good Choice' of White Families," in *Whiteout: The Continuing Significance of Racism*, ed. Ashley W. Doane and Eduardo Bonilla-Silva (New York: Routledge, 2003), 180.

6. Amy Stewart Wells, Jacquelyn Duran, and Terrenda White, "Refusing to Leave Desegregation Behind: From Graduates of Racially Diverse Schools to the Supreme Court," *Teachers College Records*, 2008, available at <http://www.tcrecord.org/PrintContent.asp?ContentID=14553>.
7. The term *other* refers to all other non-Black ethnic groups. Due to attempts to correct racial inequalities, the school district opted to use the term *other*.
8. Memmi, *Racism*, 97.
9. 2001 School Climate Survey, available at <http://www.psych.uiuc.edu/climate>.
10. The findings of this particular study focused on access, fairness, outcome, support structures, and strategic interventions in Unit 4 schools. The audit noted that within the 1997–1998 academic year, in regard to special education, discipline, and suspension, Black students were overrepresented in comparison to their White peers. In terms of enrollment, mobility, and attendance, Black students had lower attendance and graduation rates than other ethnic groups. Finally, in the gifted, talented, and advanced placement program, only Black students were disproportionately underrepresented in these settings.
11. Maxine Greene, "A Philosopher Looks at Qualitative Research," in *Complementary Methods for Research in Education*, 2nd ed., ed. Richard M. Jaeger and Tom Barone (Washington, DC: American Educational Research Association, 1997), 189–206.
12. Bonilla-Silva, *Racism without Racists*, 2.
13. Feagin, *Systemic Racism*, 25–28; Memmi, *Racism*, 1–53.
14. Herbert L. Foster, "Educators' and Non-Educators' Perceptions of Black Males: A Survey," *Journal of African American Men* 1 (1995): 37–70, 60–66.
15. Terence Fitzgerald, "Controlling the Black School-Age Male: Psychotropic Medications and the Circumvention of Public Law 94-142 and Section 504," *Journal of Urban Education* 44: 225–247, available at <http://uex.sagepub.com/pap.dtl>.
16. Derrick Bell, "*Brown v. Board of Education* and the Interest Convergence Dilemma," *Harvard Law Review* 93 (1980): 518–534.
17. Glennon, "Race, Education," 1237–1339.
18. Terry L. Rose, "Current Use of Corporal Punishment in American Public Schools," *Journal of Educational Psychology* 76 (1984): 427–441.
19. John H. Franklin, "The Two Worlds of Race: A Historical View," *Daedalus* 4 (1965): 132–152. See also Beth B. Swadener, "Stratification in Early Childhood Social Policy and Programs in the United States: Historical and Contemporary Manifestation," *Educational Policy* 9 (1995): 404–425.
20. Swadener, "Stratification," 407–408.
21. Rose, "Current Use," 427–441.
22. Feagin, *Racist America*, 113–117; see also Feagin, *Systemic Racism*, 177–178.

NOTES FOR CHAPTER 6

1. Bayton, "Disability and the Justification," 93–102.
2. Ibid.; David Roediger, *Working toward Whiteness*, 26, 67–72. See also Watkins, *White Architects*, 24–40.