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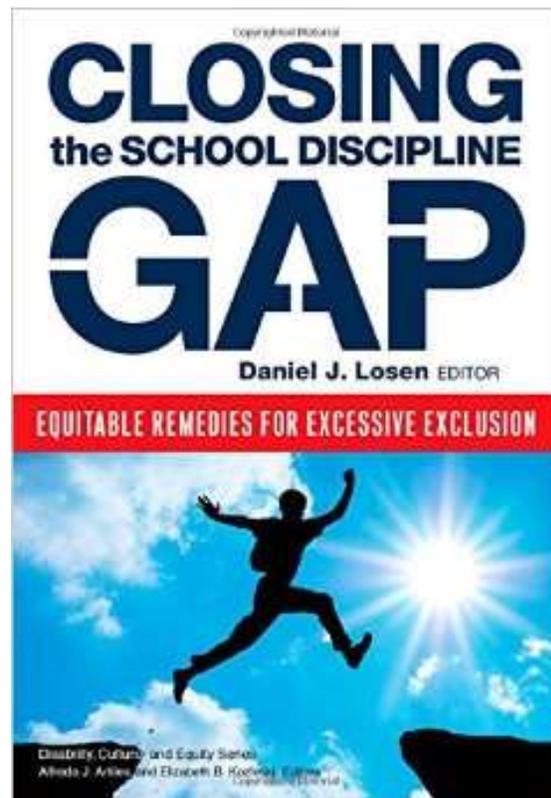
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Editor Daniel J. Losen, director of the Center for Civil Rights Remedies of the Civil Rights Project at the University of California, Los Angeles, integrates the voice and scholarship of a diverse set of researchers to provide a timely and powerful critique of current policies and practices in school discipline. *Closing the school discipline gap: Equitable remedies for excessive exclusion* presents 16 chapters that examine the evolving conversation on disparities in school discipline. Discipline disparities (often referred to as disproportionality) exist when students (i.e. racial/ethnic minorities, students in poverty, students with disabilities) receive a greater proportion of school discipline than would be predicted based on their proportion of the student population.

Part I, *Directions for Broad Policy Change*, explores the student traits that influence discipline outcomes as well as the potential harms of excessive and inequitable application of disciplinary action. While previous scholarship has addressed the pervasive existence of the



discipline gap and its many negative consequences for students, (Advancement Project, 2010; Gregory, Skiba & Noguera, 2010; Wallace, 2008), a clear consensus on the policies and practices needed to effectively intervene has yet to emerge. Part II, *Specific Remedies for Closing the School Discipline Gap*, focuses on analysis of a number of potential remedies. *Closing the school discipline gap* contributes a cohesive set of highly relevant empirical studies and, perhaps more importantly, an attendant set of long and short-term solutions to the decades old problem of inequitable discipline.

The edited volume's collection of empirical research studies in school discipline to demonstrate that out-of-school suspension is disproportionately applied to Black, economically disadvantaged, and special education students, increasing dropout and "exacerbating inequality levels between these and other student groups" (Balfanz, Brynes & Fox, 2015, pp. 18). Marchbanks III and colleagues (Chapter 4) present a novel *economic* analysis of the relationship between school discipline and grade retention and/or dropout. This chapter joins extant literature on the school to prison pipeline (Wald & Losen, 2003) in an examination of the ways in which discipline outcomes interact with structural factors (i.e. legal and economic systems) in society. Given the strong association between discipline outcomes and factors such as gender, class, race and disability status, such structural analysis represents an important evolution of the literature toward a conception of school discipline that accounts for the historical, cultural and socio-economic aspects of inequity. In chapter 9, Skiba and colleagues (2015) use multivariate analysis of school level variables, including the percentage of Black enrollment and principal disposition, to conclude that "race appears to be the strongest and most consistent non-behavioral predictor of school discipline" (p. 133). Importantly, by controlling for school level variables, the study demonstrated that the

effect of individual student race on the likelihood of suspension was reduced to statistical non-significance. This is the only known study to approximate a full statistical accounting for racial disparities in school discipline.

Part II focuses on solutions-oriented theory and practice, including restorative justice, professional development on teacher cultural responsiveness, comprehensive school reform, and trends among alternative schools. In chapter ten, González (2015) explores restorative justice as an alternative to punitive discipline practices. Restorative justice focuses on "repairing harm, involving stakeholders, and transforming community relations" (p. 151). Osher and colleagues (Chapter 13) present a case study of the Cleveland Metropolitan School District (CMSD) as a model for school reform serving students in high-poverty, high-minority communities with a large number of discipline infractions.

In 2013-2014, CMSD was comprised of 80% African Americans and Latinos with 100% of their students receiving free lunch. After three years of strategic intervention, which included replacing ineffective in-school suspension with planning centers focused on social and emotional learning strategies, CMSD was able to reduce out-of-school suspensions in the district by nearly 60%. The insightful introductory and transitional sections of the text show that Losen worked intentionally to integrate the two parts of the work. As a result, the 16 chapters offer a multifaceted, yet cohesive narrative, that addresses both the existence and amelioration of unequal disciplines practices. *Closing the school discipline gap* also supports and extends the literature by illuminating previously under-examined areas of school discipline, including discipline of black females, implementation of restorative discipline practices, and the financial costs of excessive exclusionary practices. Although past scholarship has had a tendency to simply find new and more sophisticated ways to reach the

same conclusion (that discipline disparities are pervasive and widespread), Losen's account provides new analysis and re-focuses dialogue on solutions.

While the text will be most relevant to school discipline scholars, district leaders and policymakers, the cohesive narrative and powerful research results will likely appeal to practitioners and other stakeholders concerned with equity in education. The presentation of the most recent empirical research is particularly important because it is only with the recent use of complex statistical models examining multiple variables (see Chapter 9) that a rigorous accounting of the potential contributors to discipline disparities has emerged (Fabelo, Thompson, Plotkin, Carmichael, Marchbanks & Booth, 2011; Rocque & Paternoster, 2011; Skiba, et al., 2015). However, it is primarily through rigorous qualitative research (see chapter 13) that critical questions of *how* and *why* can be

addressed. By offering a text that is both research-based and solutions-oriented, district leaders and policymakers operating within the current data-driven policy environment are able to draw actionable conclusions from the text.

Despite the notable absence of an examination of discipline disparities based on sexual identity (Himmelstien & Bruckner; 2011), *Closing the school discipline gap* approximates a comprehensive picture of the issue of discipline equity. The text's presentation of cutting edge research and a focus on solutions serve as a foundation for direct and purposive intervention on behalf of youth marginalized by current school discipline practices. As P-12 practitioners and students of urban education, we (the authors of this review) join the authors and editors of *Closing the school discipline gap* in calling for equitable outcomes school discipline.

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