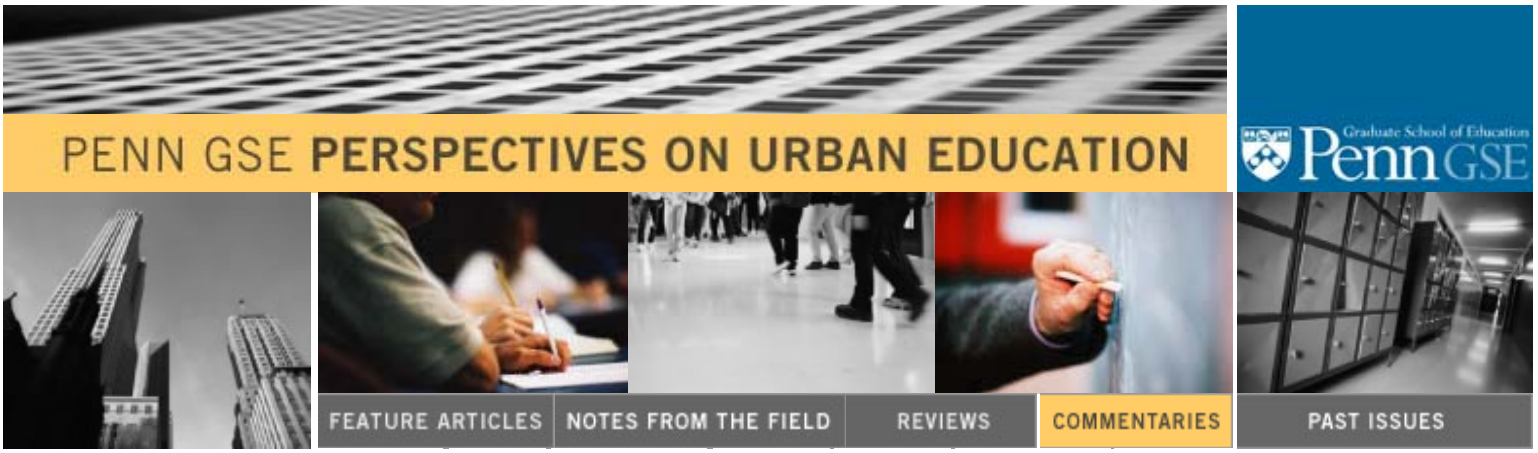

Unrelenting Expectations: A More Nuanced Understanding of the Broken Windows Theory of Cultural Management in Urban Education

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Abstract:
Much has been written about the adaptation from criminology of the "Broken Windows" theory of order maintenance in successful urban educational models. Yet, the manner in which the theory is written and discussed often misses the nuances and feel of the theory as successfully applied. This misunderstanding has lead to its conflation with the "Zero Tolerance" approach to discipline management in schools with its emphasis on draconian punishment for both serious and semi-serious offenders. The more powerful current of Broken Windows, however, emphasizes the manner in which student behavior adapts, often unconsciously, to even the subtlest of cultural expectations, when consistently applied. Thus, in order to avoid the confusion involved in the application of Broken Windows, this paper proposes the use of the phrase "Unrelenting Expectations" as a clearer descriptive term for this approach to cultural management in Urban Education.

Introduction

The success of urban educational models such as the KIPP Schools, Newark's Northstar Academy, and New Haven's Amistad Academy has been well documented (Thernstrom & Thernstrom, 2003). These schools have been able to achieve skills assessment results that not only far outpace schools serving similar populations, but have often matched or outpaced the performance of many schools from more affluent populations. There are, of course, potentially valid critiques concerning the challenges of extending the model of these relatively small charter models to large public schools systems. These concerns will be addressed later in this article. The success of the particular model of these schools in their specific context, however, is increasingly difficult to deny. Central to their pedagogical philosophy is the belief that character development and academic skills potential are mutually dependent. In their approach to the instruction of character and skills they have adapted the Broken Windows theory of criminology to school culture (Therstrom & Thernstrom, p. 67). In No Excuses: Closing the Racial Gap in Learning, the Thernstroms describe the order-maintenance philosophy of the co-founder of the KIPP schools:

> "We are fighting a battle involving skills and values," David Levin notes. "We are not afraid to set social norms." In effect he has adopted political scientist James Q. Wilson's "broken windows" theory and applied it to schools. To ignore one piece of trash on the floor. . .one shirt improperly tucked in, one fight between kids, one bit of foul language, would send a disastrous no-one-cares message. And thus, at KIPP, the staff responds to every sign of disorder—however slight. The result: Even in the lunchroom, students talk quietly and need the supervision of only one staff member. (p. 67).

The solution according to these schools to the issue of school discipline, as well as the issue of urban/non-urban skills disparities, is to create a culture of unrelentingly high expectations for student behavior, and to create a culture of order and structure which funnels student behavior and performance in the proper directions. As Ryan Hill, Director if KIPP's TEAM Academy in Newark, has said, "We focus on the smallest of problems, so that the larger problems do not arise."

Malcolm Gladwell, in his book The Tipping Point: How Little Things Can Make a Big Difference, has done much to reveal the Broken Windows theory to the popular consciousness (Gladwell, 2000). In one section of The Tipping Point, Gladwell describes how William Bratton and Rudolph Giuliani did much to reverse the crime epidemic in 1980's New York City by applying the Broken Windows theory of order-maintenance crime management. Gladwell relates the manner in which the focus of Bratton and Guiliani on seemingly minor legal infractions such as jumping turnstiles and creating graffiti helped to create a culture of order which communicated to the citizenry, in both an unconscious and conscious manner, that criminal behavior was no longer acceptable. In The Tipping Point, and its progeny Blink, Gladwell cites extensive research in the social sciences to elucidate, among other things, the manner in which subtle, minute and often unconscious influences can manifest a wide-ranging effect on human behavior (Gladwell, 2000; Gladwell, 2005). Because of his social-scientific and psychological approach, Gladwell emphasizes the potency of culture and environment in altering mass-human behavior. "Broken Windows theory and the Power of Context are one and the same. They are both based upon the premise that an epidemic can be reversed, can be tipped, by tinkering with the smallest details of the immediate environment" (Gladwell, 2000, p. 146). In other words, by vigilance in eradicating smaller signs of disorder, and by a positive emphasis on signs of order, such as ubiquitous beat cops, for example, the message is communicated that order-maintenance is a high priority and that the polity and citizenry are concerned with a structured, and thus safe, environment; social norms are created and reinforced that stigmatize what is considered socially detrimental behavior; and a culture is manifest wherein criminal behavior is reduced.

It is thus that the Broken Windows theory receives its name. The theory was first revealed in an article titled "Broken Windows" in The Atlantic Monthly written by James Q. Wilson and George L. Kelling of The Kennedy School of Government at Harvard (Wilson & Kelling, 1982). Broken windows in a high crime area, the article relates, are a symbolic communicator of disorder which supports the creation of a culture of disordered and anti-social conduct. Gladwell's interpretation of the Broken Windows theory appears to be based on an implicit anthropology which weaves its way throughout the original article in an inconsistent manner. In short, its unstated premise seems to be that human choice never occurs in a vacuum. Without abdicating human responsibility for detrimental decisions, it implies that order and culture are determined through an interactive dialectic between individual autonomy and communal influences. But Gladwell's elucidation of the Broken Windows theory goes further. It actually states that human behavior is determined, and perhaps thus not entirely chosen, by subtle factors which are not even processed on a conscious level. It is not so much that there are good and bad people making positive and negative choices. It is much more that we all are a semi-confused lot lying somewhere in a murky moral continuum. We all thus possess the potential for both positive and negative actions depending upon the multi-faceted influences of the culture in which we inhabit. Moral agency still remains, as positive and negative choices remain. But, on the whole, more of us will make positive choices in an ordered, structured, and otherwise morally positive environment.

It is the anthropology of Gladwell's interpretation of Broken Windows, I would argue, that successful urban educational models have adapted. I will turn to the power of such adaptation from an educational efficacy standpoint later in this paper. But first it must be pointed out that there is another anthropological current flowing amongst the subtle contours of the Broken Windows theory. This alternate current can, and has, flowed in a very different direction. In Wilson and Kelling's original article itself, there is at times an apparent emphasis on segregating "undesirable persons" from "decent folk" (Wilson & Kelling, pp. 4-7). It is this strain within the theory that has allowed it to occasionally merge with the "Zero Tolerance" approach to discipline control in criminology and pedagogy. In this application, social undesirables are to be punished and segregated for the sake of the greater community. "[T]he unchecked panhandler is, in effect, the first broken window" (Wilson & Kelling, p. 5). This implies a much more starkly dichotomous understanding of human nature than does Gladwell's interpretation. Under the Zero Tolerance ideology, the socially maladapted are the broken windows to be fixed—but even more often to be weeded out to create a better society. Zero Tolerance is strictly punitive, and relies upon the motivation of deterrence to insure that people will make positive decisions. In the approach outlined in Gladwell's work, however, we are all potentially "broken," and the goal should be to collectively create a culture in which our actions and behaviors can improve as a whole. While not eschewing punitive measures, the later approach is significantly more nuanced. It understands the preventative influence of both consciously analyzed and unconsciously processed environmental factors that can "tip" human behavior in a positive direction.

And thus, although Gladwell emphasizes the psychological redirection created by Giuliani and Bratton's focus on graffiti and turn-style jumpers, the popular consciousness still remembers more vividly the "weeding" out emphasis of Mayor Giuliani in rounding up squeegee men and the homeless. Indeed, Mayor Bloomberg is utilizing Rudolph Giuliani's Zero Tolerance/Broken Windows approach in New York's public schools with the greatest security problems. Under the Impact Schools Initiative, the City is infusing such schools with a high volume police presence, and segregating student offenders in school "sweep rooms" and "holding cells" (Rhee, 2007).

Zero Tolerance as a method of behavioral management grew out of the nation's frustration with the 1980's drug epidemic and concomitant violent crimes (Skiba, 2000). Its conception and rearing thus

occurred simultaneously with that of the Broken Windows theory. Its premise is based upon clearly delineated ethical determinations and moral opprobrium. Anti-social behavior, according to this approach, is not tolerated, and both major and minor infractions are punished severely. In practice as a school disciplinary method, the Zero Tolerance method manifests itself in mandatory suspension and/or expulsion rules for incidences involving weapons, drugs, alcohol, and violence, without investigation into context or intent (Skiba, 2000). Zero Tolerance is also associated with such "get tough" school safety measures as metal detectors, locker searches, school surveillance cameras and, as in the case of New York's Impact Schools Initiative, the infusion of police into school buildings (Skiba, 2000). In spite of its growth in popularity and prevalence, however, Zero Tolerance has not been shown to reduce school disciplinary issues in empirical research (Boylan, 2000; Skiba, 2002).

A more nuanced approach to Broken Windows, however, as applied in successful urban educational models, is markedly different in implementation than Zero Tolerance. It is based upon completely different assumptions concerning the nature of behavioral issues in urban youth. Zero tolerance is punitive in nature. It assumes that certain actions deserve moral condemnation, and that students either choose a positive or negative path. The implication is that negative behavior deserves retribution, and that if the retribution is severe enough in nature it will have a deterrent effect on other students. Gladwell's interpretation of Broken Windows, however, is consistently rehabilitative. It certainly recognizes that actions which are detrimental to the individual and the community warrant negative consequences. These negative consequences, however, are skillful means employed, along with many other tactics and strategies, to help students develop positive habits and character. There is, I believe, an understanding that no student "deserves" punishment. And, as earlier related, there is an insight that student choice always occurs in context. Choice is often decided by habits developed in a culture which is not always well-poised to support positive decisions. The most important insight of this approach is that it separates fault from causation. It places no blame on students who make harmful decisions due to the understanding that such choices are often maladaptive responses to the deep pain they experience. But it also simultaneously recognizes that such habitual patterns of negative choices need to be altered for the sake of the student's potential in life.[1] And, most importantly, it has an undeniable respect for the human potential of every student, and thus is unrelenting in its expectations that students will manifest academic and behavioral growth. It is thus, in order to avoid the confusion of the nuanced understanding of Broken Windows with Zero Tolerance, that this paper proposes to term this method one of "Unrelenting Expectations."[2]

An example of the distinction in application of Zero Tolerance and Unrelenting Expectations may be illustrative. I recently witnessed an incident in an urban school that parallels activities I have observed in many schools. During the last period of the day, teachers were attempting to implement a lesson plan while various students were being called in and out of class--both by loud-speaker and by students randomly opening the door and interrupting class. When students left the classroom for supplementary activities, there seemed to be no clear direction or oversight of their transition to their respective supplemental activities. In the classroom of instruction, there were papers and textbooks strewn on the floor and coats piled in a corner. Students who were not involved in the classroom instruction would enter the classroom to retrieve their coats off of the floor. In the midst of this chaotic atmosphere, a fight broke out in the hallway between students who were supposed to be involved in the supplemental activity. The students involved in the fight received detention with a possibility of suspension.

This incident reveals the short-comings of a Zero Tolerance approach, whether a particular school's policy is self-labeled under the moniker of Zero Tolerance or not. Within a strictly punitive Zero Tolerance understanding, the students involved in the fight made rationally deliberative choices to engage in negative behavior. Such behavior thus must be punished not only for its own sake, but also to inform the decision-making cost/benefit analysis of other students. Unrelenting Expectations, however, does not see the fight as a result of pure choice, but as a myriad of conscious and unconscious influences in the immediate environment that created the proclivity to fight. In short, without eliminating the moral agency of the students, it views the chaos of the school as a significant causative factor in the fight. Unrelenting Expectations management, therefore, would have focused on the need for a clean and orderly classroom, on well-organized student transition processes and communication that does not interrupt classroom instruction, and on the consistent redirection of even the smallest student inattentiveness. As will be discussed further later in this paper, there is a significant amount of research indicating that there are important unconscious influences which have great effect in the learning environment, and on human behavior in general (Davou, 2002; Kowitz, 1957). According to Unrelenting Expectations, the chaotic educational environment unconsciously stimulated an anxiety in students that made them experience fearful emotions because of the lack of control in their environment; which thus created in them extreme defensives; which led to aggressive behavior. In this case, the students had an unconscious mechanism for pre-attentive emotional assessment that had been triggered, or "primed," by the chaotic atmosphere. As Davou states: "If this mechanism detects threat, the individual develops unconscious fear and anxiety that mobilizes adaptive responses to situations to which immediate action is necessary" (Davou, p. 287).

In reality, of course, such incidents in schools may be the result more of mis-management, or even non-management, of culture, rather than a strict adherence to a Zero Tolerance approach to order-

maintenance. For example, Menacker, Hurwitz and Weldon determined in a study of school discipline in Chicago that the most pressing reason for disciplinary problems was the inefficiency and inefficacy of the implementation by schools of a district wide discipline code (Menacker et al., 1988). This brings us to the pithy and relevant issue of management, as well as educational policy and accountability—both of which are beyond the scope of this paper. And it may well be that a well-managed Zero Tolerance policy will be more effective than inefficient management of any stripe. Moreover, there are modified versions of Zero Tolerance, often termed "early response" models of school discipline, which contain graduated penalties for various levels of interruption and student mal-behavior (Skiba, p. 16). Thus, in our example above, there could have been a system of demerits or other penalties assessed for the students who did not clean up the floor, interrupted class, and walked in to obtain their outer-garments. This would have been a great improvement upon a system of non-intervention until the greatest offense, and graduated penalties are often one element in Unrelenting Expectations cultural management. But the sole focus of early response and Zero Tolerance remains the punishment of rationally calculating human actors. By placing all the responsibility of detrimental behavior upon students, it removes the responsibility from teachers and administrators to create and manage a culture that is less conducive to behavior that disrupts learning. Unrelenting Expectations dictates the pro-active creation and management of a culture of order, one aspect of which may be based upon incentives. It recognizes a holistic approach to order maintenance that both highlights the importance of student choice, and emphasizes the unconscious and conscious workings of culture that may influence such choice in various directions.

Thus, in application, I believe there are four key elements to the successful building of strong urban academic and behavioral culture under the Unrelenting Expectations approach. They are 1) Explicit character instruction; 2) Rewards and negative consequences for even the minutest of negative and positive behavior; 3) An academic and behavioral culture of excellence which recognizes the power of unconscious learning from the surrounding environment; and 4) The trust of the students which can only develop over time from the consistent show of love and compassion by teachers and administrators.

As these four elements are examined in more detail in the following section, I will give examples from both successful educational models mentioned above, as well as from personal experience in implementing the method in the successful out-of-school time programs of Legal Outreach in New York City, and NJ LEEP in Newark.

Explicit Character Instruction

The first step is to recognize that character is not only inextricably tied to behavior, but is an essential element of academic achievement in urban youth. There is, I believe, in Unrelenting Expectations an intensely practical understanding that the future of the urban student will depend upon the character they are able to manifest. There is a realistic acceptance that the urban context demands much more of its students than does the suburban. The pull toward the negatives of violence, drugs, gangs, academic sub-performance, and the lack of prevalent structures to streamline students away from such influences, demand the strength of character which is not required of the non-urban student. Thus, the method is not only concerned with educating good citizens and creating future leadership. It is at a more immediate level focused upon the need for students to create the moral strength for survival—to create not only the heart, but also the insight of a successful warrior. It is the recognition of the quotidian nature of the success of urban students—that they must make moral choices every day to eschew negative influences and to devote themselves to discipline and study.

Leadership, Character and Life Skills Classes

Much of explicit character instruction is increasingly being carried out in classes and workshops on such things as leadership, character and life skills. This is an essential part of the equation which is most often focused upon two underlying themes (which are not exhaustive).

1. It is essential that students are able to reflect upon their long-term goals and values and have them determine their immediate choices. I would venture to say that many who have worked in urban education have consistently worked with teenage students who state very solid goals for their life, but who do not discern the disconnect between their stated ten and fifteen year goals and the choices they make and the habits they manifest on an every day basis. Thus, one focus of character education is to not only teach important values such as honesty, diligence, respect, cooperation, etc., but to encourage constant student introspection upon the manner in which their life and actions reflect their values. Leading students to a point of buying into the importance of such values is the relatively easy part of such a project. Much more difficult is the task of affecting every-day student behavior. This is because of the tremendous unconscious and habitual pull that various environmental influences bring to bear on the teenage mind. Thus, the first step is to help students understand the effect of such ubiquitous negative influences. The second step, to be discussed later, is to create, in partnership with parents and other community

resources, a consistent culture of excellence in order to reframe the unconscious and habitual influences.

2. It is essential that students buy into the idea that their fate is tied into the fate of their immediate educational community. This model is based upon the idea that urban students must develop a level of trust and buy-in for their community of excellence, even if it is not explicitly admitted by such students. Students must also accept the importance and power of competition among like-minded peers, as a means of raising the level of performance of all within the community. Indeed, at NJ LEEP, we often tell the students that their classmates are not the real competition, although they should be challenged by each other. Their real competition is those from suburban school nationally, and high achieving schools internationally, who are preparing to excel within the rigors of competitive collegiate environments, or are on pace to develop the skills necessary for successful jobs in what has become an international economy.

Constant Explicit Reinforcement

But such character instruction will not be effective if it is segregated into one or two hours of instruction per week. Character instruction must become part of the explicit fabric of the educational community. It must be reinforced at orientations, parent workshops, lunch rooms, and in math and science class, etc. Administrators and teachers should be trained, and held accountable, to incorporate these values into a daily message that character and academic success are wedded together in the community's formula for success.

As an example, this summer in NJ LEEP's five-week Summer Law Institute for urban ninth graders, we had several female students who were having problems with conflict escalation. With even the slightest sign of conflict, there was immediate staff intervention. There were negative consequences, per the next section, for neck rolling and finger wagging, and for "she said so and so" and "I'm not going to put up with it." But these were not only treated as negative behavioral manifestations, but also as teaching opportunities. For each conflict, the participating students were lead through a mediation exercise by staff—students were taught to look at staff and not each other when expressing their feelings; they learned that micro-messaging such as sighing, teeth sucking, the rolling of eyes, etc., communicated disrespect even when it was not their intention to do so; they learned to speak in terms of "we" instead of accusatory "you's;" and, after each mediation session, they realized that there was absolutely no substance to the conflict. Nothing ever happened. It was just a series of escalating communications based upon overly personalized interpretations and a defensiveness born of an intense desire to feel respected. The students were involved in their own post-modern parable revealing the emptiness and relativity of phenomena except for their subjective interpretations determined by their own emotional schemas.

By the end of the five week period, these same female students were notifying staff at the smallest sign of conflict to help mediate. They were also catching themselves in mid-sentence and rephrasing concerns in less accusatory language and with less disrespectful body language and tone. Such lessons learned were more important than any of the academic substance taught during the summer session.

Rewards and Negative Consequences

Like character instruction, rewards and negative consequences for student academic and behavioral performance are becoming more prevalent. In an Unrelenting Expectations approach, there are positive and negative consequences for even the smallest manifestation of positive and negative behavior. Such consequences, however, are thought of as pedagogical rather than punitive. The approach is based upon the graduated theory of moral development espoused by Lawrence Kohlberg which can be found on the walls of Unrelenting Expectations schools such as TEAM Academy in Newark, or in books written by Unrelenting Expectations cult heroes such as Rafe Esquith (Esquith, 14). According to Kohlberg, the first stages of character development depend upon positive habitual responses created by a consistent cost/benefit analysis on the part of the student. Students first begin to manifest positive behavior because of an aversion to punishment or an attachment to reward. It is only in more advanced stages of character development, after positive habitual responses have been established, that students begin to develop character as virtue—the ability to manifest behavior motivated by concern for others or out of an ontological expression of one's own nature (Daeg de Mott, 2001).

Thus, again, Unrelenting Expectations is intensely practical. It accepts that student, and even perhaps human, behavior always possesses at least a tinge of myopic self-interest. It further taps into such self-interest to begin to reframe and redirect behavior in a way that will be more beneficial to students in the long run. It has as a stated goal the development of virtue in its students, but it understands the path to such a goal begins with the consistent application of rewards and negative consequences. Such explicit consequences, however, are not necessarily inconsistent with the idea, mentioned, above, that student choices are often influenced unconsciously by environmental triggers. It is the recognition that one aspect of behavior is human choice, while attempting to make the consequences to choice as immediate and obvious to students as possible. In a sense, Unrelenting Expectations attempts to create

a culture of positive influence, while simultaneously instructing students to become stronger moral agents who can make positive decisions independent of culture. It is thus, again, intensely practical and holistic, as it adapts all moral influences toward its stated end goal.

In the application of negative consequences, adherents of Unrelenting Expectations also explicitly instruct the students to understand that such consequences are not to be understood as punishments, but are being chosen by them. The message is that all negative behavior in life contains negative consequences as a natural correlate. Thus negative consequences should not be understood as punishments from beyond, but as something within the student's power to choose or not choose.

Thus, in schools based upon Unrelenting Expectations, there is often some form of "paycheck" or stipend given to students that reflect their behavioral performance. In the Bronx KIPP school, for example, checks are given weekly to students as a reflection of their adherence to rules of attendance, neatness, promptness, respect, etc. The "money" from such checks can be used to "purchase" supplies from the KIPP store, or may be used as a requirement to earn eligibility to attend a school trip (Thernstrom & Thernstrom, p. 72). At Legal Outreach and NJ LEEP, the Summer Law Institute for rising ninth graders is an introductory precursor to a four-year college bound program. Students are eligible to earn $175 in cash at the end of the five weeks. However, they are fined for each violation of a high expectations rule. Total fines are deducted from the $175 stipend for which they were initially eligible. So, for example, for each minute they are late to class, they are fined 1$. For each tardy homework assignment, they are fined $3, etc. There are also escalating fines for more serious infractions.

The most important aspect of such rewards and negative punishments, however, and the aspect with its roots in Broken Windows, is the consistent attention to detail in assigning negative consequences to the smallest of infractions. Thus, negative body language, for example, is considered an overt sign of disrespect toward staff. There is no rush toward fines or severe consequences, however, as there are many forms of re-direction that can be utilized before heavier penalties come into play. But every smallest whiff of negativity is noted and redirected. According to the Broken Windows ancestry of Unrelenting Expectations, to allow students to roll their eyes, arrive to class five minutes late, or speak out when another student or teaching is speaking, is to send a powerful conscious and unconscious message that such behavior is tolerated. It also sends the message that more severe negative behavior will also be allowed. Realistically speaking, it can be a tough and taxing hall to transform culture in such a manner with urban students. But there are certainly communities that have shown that with unrelenting and consistent application of such standards, transformation can take place.

The most challenging issue, however, in effective Unrelenting Expectations implementation is that ultimately it is more a matter of management than pedagogy. This is to say, a verbal commitment to the philosophy will have little positive effect by itself. The process is everything. There must be effective managerial processes and procedures in place and written down, and teachers and administrators must be held accountable to such processes and procedures. Moreover, the most effective accountability will also take place when managers see it as their role to actively create buy-in in the teachers and administrators that they supervise. As previously mentioned, there is an entire important discussion of educational management that is beyond the scope of this paper. In the next session, however, this paper will discuss an essential aspect of management and leadership—the creation of a culture of excellence for administrators, teachers, and students.

Culture of Excellence and Unconscious Learning

As has been previously mentioned, the use of explicit character instruction, as well as the use of rewards and negative consequences, has become an increasingly popular practice in urban education. However, the essential and by far most difficult aspect of successful Unrelenting Expectations implementation, and the aspect which is most likely the least practiced, is the creation of an exacting culture of order, structure and excellence to the minutest details which operates as a consistent unconscious influence on teachers, administrators and students. This is also the real transformative power of the original Broken Windows theory and the popularized social-scientific work of Malcolm Gladwell as applied to educational management.

In Blink: The Power of Thinking Without Thinking, Gladwell fleshes out the idea, based on extensive social-scientific research from various sources, that a significant amount of human action and judgment is based upon our "powers of rapid cognition" (Gladwell, 2005). Our powers of rapid cognition are derived from the human proclivity to react unconsciously to stimuli without conscious reflection. Much of what we do and decide, in other words, is based upon unconscious environmental influences which, over-time, determine our habitual responses. But the power of such Broken Windows-esque rapid cognition for educational management is that we can collectively decide to alter the influences of our unconscious if our responses are maladapted.

In Blink you'll meet doctors and generals and coaches and furniture designers and musicians and actors and car salesmen and countless others, all of whom owe their success, at least in part, to the steps they

have taken to shape and manage and educate their own unconscious reactions. The power of knowing, in that first two seconds, is not a gift given magically to a fortunate few. It is an ability that we can cultivate for ourselves (Gladwell, 2005, p. 16).

Consider, for example, Gladwell's chapter exploring the research conducted by Ekman and Friesen on facial expressions and rapid cognition. In a series of experiments, these two psychologists discovered that facial "'expression alone is sufficient to create marked changes in the autonomic nervous system. . . What we were generating were sadness, anguish. And when I lower my brows. . .and raise the upper eyelid. . .I'm generating anger'" (Gladwell, 2005, pp. 206-07). Other research experiments by Ekman, Friesen and others confirms that voluntary facial constructions can be the cause to produce the subjective emotional experience associated with such construction (Levenson et al., 1990). Research also extends this concept to various cultural influences which can unconsciously produce aggression (Todorov et al., 2002). Finally, pedagogical scholarship has described the strong correlation between school culture and climate, and student behavior and learning (Dupper et al., 2002). One potential implication of such research for cultural management centers on the power of body language and facial expression in creating and reinforcing emotions that may potentially escalate into serious behavioral infractions. For instance, when we teach students, and reinforce such teachings through positive and negative consequences, not to roll their eyes, sigh, suck their teeth, wag their finger, etc., we are not only teaching them not to communicate disrespect. We are, this research suggests, teaching them to actually eliminate feelings of disrespect and frustration, and to cease in the communication of such emotions to teachers and other students. Studies further suggest that our unconscious perception of such emotional signals will actually influence how we perceive and interpret future, even unrelated, stimuli (Ferguson et al., 2005). By extension, it may be that communities can create collective schemas, or lenses, which will interpret signals and environment in a positive manner if there has been a consistent standard of positive expression in the past. Habit, consistently applied, becomes virtue. And when such signs of disrespect are consistently addressed, and when over time such negative micro-messaging decreases, our powers of rapid cognition pick up unconsciously that such negative communication is not a part of the culture. It has a snowball effect.

The power of unconscious learning and rapid cognition are also the basis for the fastidious attention to cleanliness, order and structure which is ubiquitous in Unrelenting Expectations. One piece of trash on the floor, an un-tucked shirt, speaking out of turn, or even an accidental pen mark made by student on a desk, are all markers of the beginnings of an environment of unstructured learning. Such things are also, however, an unconscious signal to everyone that discipline and order are not valued. Thus, it will have minimized effect to teach students the importance of discipline and organization in their academic lives, when there are signs in the classroom, explicit or implicit, that such habits are not actually valued by the community. There is also, I believe, a base-line belief underpinning Unrelenting Expectations that chaos and disorder are painful. Chaos is not based upon the autonomy of the individual, but upon the inability of all those involved in chaotic structures to confront the myriad of painful issues in their collective lives. If however, a community is able to create the alternative—a non-fear based structured existence—all those within the community will benefit.

And the absence of fear (not necessarily the same as the aversion to negative consequences) in the creation of structure and order is essential under Unrelenting Expectations. This is perhaps a key distinction between Zero Tolerance and Unrelenting Expectations. Again, the process is paramount. The important approach of Wilson and Kelling's Broken Windows theory of order-maintenance criminology is not just the increase of a police presence, but an increase of foot-patrol police presence in a manner that the police are trained to interact with the community and gain its trust (Wilson and Kelling, p. 5). And thus, according to Unrelenting Expectations, an order-maintenance culture can be created without intimidation or even judgment. It is much more about the attention to detail, consistent redirection, and relationship development.

As an example, transitions are key symbolic indicators of Unrelenting Expectations order-maintenance. The transition from classroom to classroom, from class to lunch, or from the last class to the outside of the building, can give powerful instruction to students on the importance of building discipline into all elements of their lives. Even in an ordered and structure classroom, there can be a tremendous amount of pent-up energy ready to explode upon the crossing of the classroom threshold. Ordered transitions, however, will communicate that the entire culture of the community is structured and respectful. It will also help students begin to discipline their energies, so that they can be re-funneled for empowering pursuits. At TEAM Academy in Newark, for example, students are required to line up for transitions and are not allowed to proceed (slowly) to the next class until everyone is silent and attentive. But again, in viewing this discipline one gets no sense of being at boot camp. In this setting the order is natural and is communicated with a palpable sense of compassion.

Compassion and Trust

Compassion is also a quintessential ingredient. There is, I believe, underlying Unrelenting Expectations, a deep compassion for urban students and the pain they experience, and a resultant zeal to help them manifest the great potential they hold within them. But this compassion cannot be patronizing and must

always remain ensconced in humility. The most important aspect of the collective creation of a culture of Unrelenting Expectations is the understanding that it will help all individuals of the community, be they administrators, teachers, students, or others, become better persons. Adult modeling of high expectations is a key element. The effect of teaching students about promptness, organization, respect, etc., will be minimal if the adults in the community are not consistently manifesting these traits. But with collective buy-in there can be a recognition that the creation of positive culture can take everyone to a higher standard.

Moreover, the consistent application of such compassion and humility will, over time, build trust in the students toward each other and the adults in the community. This is not a maudlin need for emotional expression. There is, I believe, a realistic understanding that it can sometimes take years to gain a student's trust and that trust will not always be explicitly communicated by students. It is more about the micro-messaging communicated when rules are consistently and fairly applied, and when adults work on depersonalizing their actions with students. It is the attempt to remove personal frustration and needs from the equation. It is the willingness to listen and support students in the difficulties in their life, without ever relenting on holding them accountable. It is the belief that most students, even those with the most hardened exteriors, are at some level yearning for compassion that is shown through structure, consistent high standards, and the reliable presence of a caring adult.

Conclusion

There is a saying from Chinese and Japanese spiritual traditions: One inch and heaven and earth are eternally separated. The Broken Windows theory of cultural management has had a very positive influence on an urban educational model that has shown impressive results in both behavioral and academic outcomes. However, understanding the difference of process and underlying assumptions in application can be of great benefit in understanding the extreme differences between the ideology of Zero Tolerance on the one hand, and what this paper has called Unrelenting Expectations, on the other. The point is that Zero Tolerance and Broken Windows are neither the same thing, nor entirely different. Zero Tolerance is one, but only one, natural development of the original Broken Windows theory. Unrelenting Expectations, however, is also a natural development of Broken Windows, and one that has shown great promise for application in urban education.

It appears, however, that the Unrelenting Expectations approach has for the most part been applied successfully thus far in charter schools, and other smaller educational communities. Thus, there has been doubt concerning its application to larger public schools and systems based upon two concerns: 1) The complications and challenges of its application will multiply exponentially when applied to much larger systems. 2) Charter schools, even though they accept students through a lottery system, in effect serve distinct demographics from public schools. There is, the argument goes, a self-selection process in the charter lottery system whereby families who already provide a great deal of the structure that Unrelenting Expectations proposes to offer, are those that have the family structure and ability to take the initiative to apply. The families with the greatest need are not those that are applying to such schools. There is, quite, frankly, a great deal of merit in these critiques. I do believe that the application of the Unrelenting Expectations model to larger public schools will offer a myriad of complications and challenges proportionate to the size of the school and the issues facing the families that the school serves. However, I also believe that the approach has been successfully applied to such an impressive degree in smaller pockets of excellence, by educational communities serving low income students from very challenging urban neighborhoods, that the challenge should be undertaken.

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[1]This is not to say that expulsion and suspension will never be warranted, but that it should only be used as a last option after a series of re-directive actions have already been taken. Thus, utilitarianism is not completely ignored, as there are some students whose consistent behavioral indiscretions may threaten the continuing high expectations focus of the community.

[2]Unrelenting Expectations is also, I believe, a more descriptively accurate term for this approach than "No Excuses," which is sometimes employed by the approach's advocates. "No Excuses" is in fact the title of another key Unrelenting Expectations source book written by Abigail and Stephan Thernstrom. "No Excuses," however, I believe, also has the potential to be misinterpreted, especially by its critics. It is true that Unrelenting Expectations accepts no excuses from teachers, administrators or students. However, it is not a matter of sending the message to students: "I don't want to hear it. Just do your homework. No Excuses!" One of the main points of this paper is that process is essential. It is not just what you say or what you believe, but how it is said and how it is implemented. I believe that Unrelenting Expectations understands that many urban students have extreme challenges in their lives, and these challenges, and the resultant pain, will indeed make it very difficult to succeed academically and behaviorally. But Unrelenting Expectations communicates both explicitly and implicitly that in spite of, or perhaps on a deeper existential level, because of, such obstacles, students can achieve at a high level. Unrelenting Expectations is willing to listen (when appropriate) and sympathize with pain, but is unwilling to allow pain to be a justification for underachievement.

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