

Title: The Effects of School Discipline and Philosophical Hermeneutics on the School-to-Prison Pipeline

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The increase in K-12 students being funneled into the school-to-prison pipeline began in the mid-1980s to early 1990s with the theory of Broken Windows Policing by political scientist James Q. Wilson and criminologist George L. Kelling. They postulate that crime is a disorder that will cause more serious crime later, if it is not eliminated at the outset. Broken Windows led to the zero-tolerance policies enacted in schools, which disproportionately affected students of color. In an effort to find even more ways to control negative behavior, the medicalization of education began, leading to a spike in ADHD diagnoses and prescription medication to young students. Combined with increased usage of in-school suspensions, out-of-school suspensions, and school resource officers, schoolhouses effectively morphed into minimum security prisons. These policies placed children in the school-to-prison pipeline, without any substantial solutions for rescue and rehabilitation before the student ends up in the prison system. The natural sciences methodology alone has failed to combat this problem, because of the lack of a human sciences approach. German Philosopher Hans Georg-Gadamer coined philosophical hermeneutics, the study of human understanding developed by Gadamer in his magnum opus, "Truth and Method" (1975). Gadamer wrote that understanding is the basis for human existence and that language shapes the ways in which humans understand the world. Adopting a combined approach of Gadamer's hermeneutics, with the natural sciences would prevent the inevitability of children falling into the school-to-prison pipeline, by accounting for subjective ontology and reducing reified discourses associated with troubled children.

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