School-to-Prison Pipeline and Academic Achievement: History, Impact, and Policy Interventions

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Scope of the Issue

- Defining the school-to-prison pipeline
- Zero-tolerance policies
- Huge increase in school-based arrests
  - Nearly tripled in 7 years in some states (Cregor and Hewitt 2011)
- School → Disciplinary Practice → Juvenile Justice Involvement → Criminal Justice Involvement
Disproportionately Impacted Populations

• Students of color
  • 38% of general population; 70% of incarcerated juveniles
• Dane County:
  • Black students 6x more likely to be arrested
  • Black students 15x more likely to be suspended
• Residents without high school diploma:
  • 3% white residents
  • 13% black residents
  • 12% Asian American residents
  • 23% Latinx residents
Disproportionately Impacted Populations

- Youth with disabilities
  - Out-of-school suspension: overrepresented by 13.2%
  - Law enforcement referral: overrepresented by 15.5%
  - Expulsion: overrepresented by 12.1%

- LGBTQ youth
  - 12.5% absent in the last month due to feeling unsafe
  - 5-7% of general population; 13-15% of juvenile justice
Policy Interventions

• Diversion programs for nonviolent offenses

• Transition/Reentry services for students returning to school from a juvenile detention center

• Restorative interventions for students

• End of referrals for status offenses
Example of Predicted Outcomes

• Differ by target population and policy intervention

• Example: WISE Diversion program (Fader et al. 2015):
  • 2500+ students in school, 85 in program (1 in 29 students)
  • 26% of participants missed 5+ fewer days of school
  • 11% of participants improved GPA by 10+ points
  • 15% of participants experienced 3+ fewer disciplinary referrals
Example of Predicted Outcomes

• In a hypothetical Dane County school of 2,100 students, where 72 are diverted...
  • If offense could have warranted suspension: 67 students participating would be African-American (15x more likely to be suspended than White students in Dane County) and 5 students would be white
  • If offense could have warranted arrest: 62 students would be African-American (6x more likely to be arrested than White students in Dane County) and 10 students would be white
  • While small percentage, huge impact on extreme racial disparities resulting in school-to-prison pipeline in Dane County
Questions & Comments

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