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School-to-Prison Pipeline; Its Creation, Effects, and How It Can Be Diminished

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Abstract

The school-to-prison pipeline is a term that refers to a system of policies and practices that pushes students out of the classroom and into the criminal justice system and mainly affects children of color, children with disabilities, and children who identify in the LGBTQIA+ community. There are three main reasons for this system of oppression and its continuation: zero-tolerance disciplinary policies, discrimination practices, and policing in schools (nea.org). Instead of providing mediation and counseling to figure out why students act out, schools increasingly resort to punishment pushing more children towards incarceration. This system has been proven to have a greater impact and prevalence in southern schools because of the large population of African American students and the harsh racial history of this region. After looking at existing research about the school-to-prison pipeline, how it operates, and its effects, this paper examines four potential policy changes that could be made to decrease the prevalence of the system. I conclude that instead of increasing the use of school resource officers, schools should look to increasing the use of restorative justice and hiring more professionals to help children rather than punish them. Restorative justice could help diminish the school-to-prison pipeline.

Keywords: Criminal justice system, restorative justice, race

Introduction

The school-to-prison pipeline is a set of practices and policies that contributes to pushing children out of the classroom and towards the criminal justice system. Currently, 82% of prison inmates are high school drop-outs, which could be an outcome of the pipeline (Rodriguez, 2017). Rodriguez explains how this system works: when a student is taken out of the classroom due to misbehavior or absences and is given detentions and suspensions, they are more likely to become a drop-out

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(2017). They will resort to dropping out because when they are taken out of the classroom, they easily get behind in school work, and without guidance they feel like they cannot get back on track. The fact that around 1 in 14 students are suspended each year is a huge problem (González, 2012). That number does not seem like a lot, but it is one that could be avoided. In order to address this issue, two very important topics that are extremely relevant today must be combined: criminal justice reform and a school system reform.

The purpose of this research is to examine how the school-to-prison pipeline impacts schools throughout the country and to investigate policies that might mitigate negative effects. Helping diminish the pipeline could be a start to making schools a better and safer environment for everyone. Since this influences the high numbers of people that are in the prison systems, this could also help address the problem of mass incarceration in the United States. Restorative justice could not only be a good solution to implement in the criminal justice system but in schools too.

After looking at four different policy alternatives, I conclude that instead of increasing the use of school resource officers, schools should use restorative justice tools and hire more professionals to help children rather than punish them. The paper will first look at the history of the school-to-prison pipeline and how it affects certain groups of people. Next, I compare policy alternatives to help alleviate the school-to-prison pipeline. Finally, the recommended policy alternative of replacing school resource officers with counselors will be discussed.

History

The school-to-prison pipeline (also called the jail-to-rail or the schoolhouse to jailhouse track) is a problem with various causes. A mixture of unconscious biases and the mentality of being tough on crime play a large role in the pipeline's existence. Unconscious biases, also known as implicit biases, are usually snap judgments that individuals make about certain people or groups of people (McNeal, 2016). These typically happen quickly enough that people do not even realize it. Implicit biases play a role in creating the pipeline because when people have stereotypes about young people of color being dangerous, they tend to link those to other people of color and unconsciously think that they too should be punished (McNeal, 2016). Another reason for the pipeline is that we are in a time where mass shootings have become more prevalent and normalized. Looking to police officers and strict security measures like metal detectors have become common methods used to help keep children safe. Unfortunately, this is where unconscious biases play a role in disproportionately punishing minority students (McNeal, 2016). If police officers see youth, especially young black boys, as potentially dangerous, punishment becomes a way to deal with any behavior problems they might exhibit (McNeal, 2016).

Mass incarceration describes the huge number of people in the prison

systems in the United States, and this phenomenon is related to practices in schools (ACLU, 2014). The mentality of being tough on crime has made its way into the school system disguised as zero tolerance disciplinary policies. Just like being tough on crime led to an increase in the prison population starting in the 1970s, zero tolerance disciplinary policies have increased the number of students being pushed into the criminal justice system (ACLU, 2014). These policies have also been shown to disproportionately affect people of color and other minority groups. The prison industrial complex is a term used to describe the quick creation of more prisons to keep up with mass incarceration (ACLU, 2014). The pipeline is an easy way to funnel people unwanted by society and the political systems into a subclass of humanity. The people affected by over-policing are, again, are often people who have disabilities, are people of color, or are of low socio-economic status (ACLU, 2014).

Disproportionality by Race and Gender

Data compiled by the American Bar Association, collected by the U.S. Department of Education Civil Rights division during the 2011-12 school year, is displayed in the next three figures (Redfield & Nance, 2016).

Image 1, above, shows what percentages of the youth in some form of juvenile corrections (detained, convicted in criminal court, diverted, and adjudicated and placed) are from each racial or ethnic group. If removals from school were actually

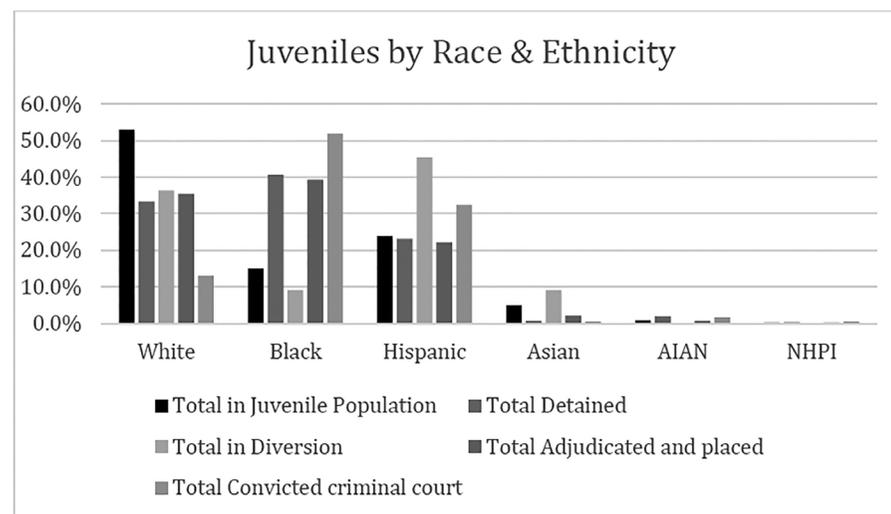


Image 1: Juveniles Detained & Placed by Race & Ethnicity (Redfield & Nance, 2016)

making the schools safer or improved, the outcomes of the students could perhaps be justified, but that is not the case here (Redfield & Nance, 2016). Redfield and Nance show that most removals are for behaviors that do not threaten the safety of

other students (2016). This is further explained by the fact that out of the 3.3 million students being suspended, 95% of them are for nonviolent misbehaviors (Redfield & Nance, 2016).

The most dramatic section of the graph is the black population of students. These students make up only fifteen percent of the school population but are detained, adjudicated and placed at around forty-five percent, while their white counterparts are detained at a rate of around thirty-five percent shows the racial disparity. The white student population in schools is over fifty percent, but they only makeup thirty-five percent that are being handled by police officers, and then only around ten percent that are being convicted is mind boggling. In other words, black children make up a smaller percentage of the student population, but the largest percentages facing the harshest punishments that interrupt their schooling. There is no justification for this racial disproportionality, with studies showing that children misbehave at similar rates across racial categories (Redfield & Nance, 2016).

Image 2 zooms in on how African American children are disproportionately affected by the system compared to other races. This chart compares the percentage of the African American student population as a whole to their percentages among

Disproportionality of African Americans

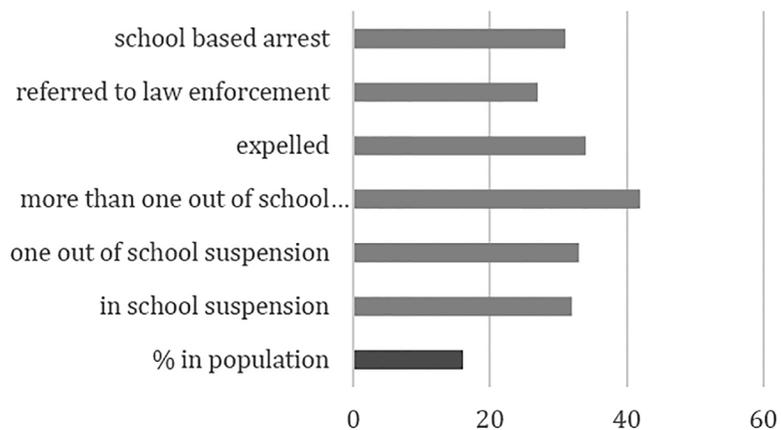


Image 2: Disproportionality Illustrated, African American (Redfield & Nance, 2016)

those with disciplinary actions to prove that there is an uneven representation of black students being disciplined. In the 2011-2012 school year, shown by the graph above, African American students were only sixteen percent of the student population, but they made up thirty-three percent of students who were given out of school suspensions. They also made up forty-two percent of children who received

more than one out of school suspension and thirty four percent of students who were expelled (Redfield & Nance 2016). This bar graph supports that African American students make up a small amount of the school population but are punished at higher rates even though studies prove that all races misbehave at similar rates (Redfield & Nance, 2016).

Image 3 shows that disciplinary actions are taken disproportionately against girls based on their race. Hispanic girls are disciplined at about the same percentage of their makeup of the school population. Again, even though black students are only

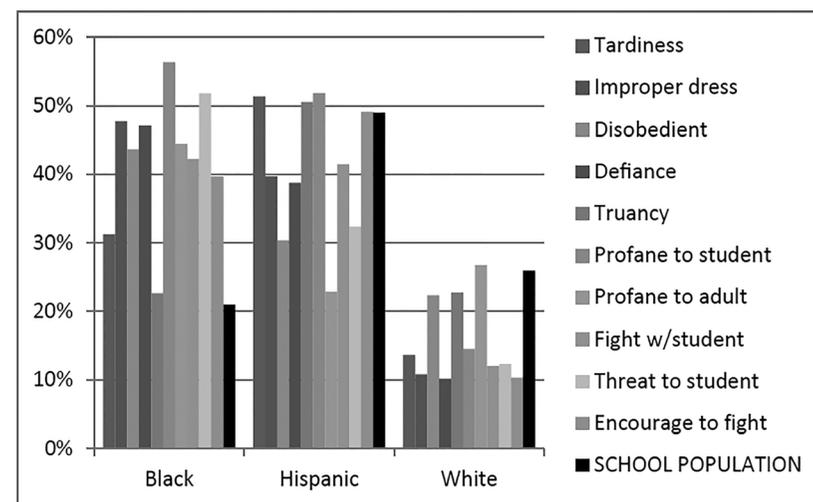


Image 3: Discipline Disproportionately Girls (Redfield & Nance, 2016)

around twenty percent of the school population they are disciplined at around double the rate (40%) of white females, which is around ten to twenty percent (Redfield & Nance, 2016). This emphasizes the role of the different relationships and expectations that teachers have for white female students compared to black female students. Researchers have been able to demonstrate that when minority students have a teacher who holds less discriminatory views, they will do better in the classroom than they would having a teacher that holds prejudicial views towards them (Redfield & Nance, 2016). The self-fulfilling prophecy is where teachers expect certain students to have better performance than the rest, and therefore they get that behavior from those students (Redfield & Nance, 2016). When teachers have implicit biases towards certain types of students, those students are more apt to be labeled negatively. These expectations can be a huge factor and a cause for racial and gender disparities when associating it with their academics and pipeline events (Redfield & Nance, 2016).

Analysis of Policy Options to Diminish the Pipeline

After doing research on policy options to help get rid of the pipeline, I found four especially promising options. The four options include bringing restorative justice techniques to schools, removing zero-tolerance policies, replacing SROs with counselors, and scaling back on strict security. The goal here is to help decrease the prevalence of the practices that make up the school-to-prison pipeline, while acknowledging it might not be possible to get rid of it because there will always be implicit biases that people have. I chose techniques that are action-based, and I did this because these have the best chance to work. One can never get rid of people's personal biases but getting rid of the system that makes it easier for people to act on those biases is a start.

Restorative Justice Techniques.

Restorative justice is about getting at the root cause and providing children with intervention and support to understand why they misbehave (Redfield & Nance, 2016). It is an attempt to stop the harsh cycle of oppression and recidivism that people face when they enter the criminal justice system. Instead of discipline, restorative justice works to rehabilitate people through reconciliation and counseling to help solve the issue, rather than putting a Band-Aid on it. In a Ted Talk, Debra Postil says something that really captures what restorative justice is all about, "asking children not 'what is wrong with you?' but instead asking 'what happened to you?'" (2016). Finding the root cause to the issue, not disciplining the student, and finding ways to help them avoid misbehavior again are the main steps of restorative justice techniques.

Image 4, above, shows two different scenarios or settings that could occur while walking into a school. The first is the current system that schools use to

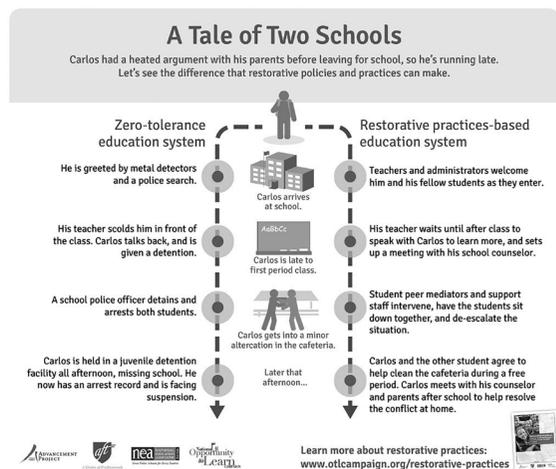


Image 4: A Tale of Two Schools (NEA, 2014)

help people visualize why the pipeline exists. Utilizing zero-tolerance policies and disciplinary actions show negative results. When a student walks into school and is greeted by metal detectors, sets them off because of something that was not a safety hazard, they are then forced to be even more late to class. This then makes the bad start to the student's day even worse and has a domino effect which leads to other events like the student getting into more disciplinary trouble. In the first scenario there is no mediation or any effort to figure out why the student is behaving as they are. The second scenario is an example of how restorative justice techniques can be used in that situation. The student was late to class and instead of the teacher embarrassing the student in front of everyone, they get pulled aside afterwards to get to the root cause of the problem. Students are counseled during a free period of the day, and not pulled out of school to be punished which starts a cycle because they miss more schooling because of this. These two very different scenarios have a huge effect on students, their school work, and the outcome for the rest of their life.

The American Bar Association hosted a Houston Town Hall Meeting on February 6, 2015 where they brought together speakers who talked about the pipeline. Doctor Marilyn Armour talked about the Restorative Justice Project that was piloted in several schools in Texas. She found that this technique dropped tardiness by thirty-nine percent as well as reduced out of school discipline by eighty-four percent (Redfield & Nance, 2016). Using restorative justice techniques that are shown in image 4 changes the whole school climate because of the shift from punishment to building relationships which then changes the attitudes of the students (Redfield & Nance, 2016). Lowering tardiness, decreasing out of school discipline, and creating a healthier atmosphere are all positives that come out of using restorative justice techniques in schools to help reduce the school-to-prison pipeline. The negatives of using restorative justice techniques include that it does not work for all student misbehaviors, there is a long transition period, and it does not work on all types of children. An example of when restorative justice may not work is that not all kids respond to mediation and counseling. Some students may respond better to being punished and having the reality check that there are consequences to their actions.

Having an environment like the second image could make students feel safer and would not create a prison-type atmosphere. Having a school where students are greeted with police officers and metal detectors already makes them feel guilty (Redfield & Nance, 2016). Children can understand how people perceive them and people who are like them, and they can end up taking on these labels (Redfield & Nance, 2016). This can be further explained with labeling theory, which is where when certain groups of people are defined as deviant which leads them to then act in deviant ways (Knutsson, 1977). In this situation of the school to prison pipeline, the metal detectors and other strict security measures are making the children feel like they are guilty/deviant, and they might then act in deviant ways because of this. Using

restorative justice techniques removes easy ways to target certain groups of students who are most commonly affected by the pipeline and eliminates the prison-type atmosphere. Having a school where children are greeted with happy faces and people who want to genuinely help them can make a world of a difference in the attitude of the students and how they act. Changing the school climate and focusing on positive relationships brings positive results.

Removing zero-tolerance policies from schools.

Zero-tolerance policies have been proven to take children away from the classroom and the learning environment, and it is clear this disproportionately happens to minority children. This then produces a plethora of other problems, as discussed earlier. When students are taken out of the classroom and are subjected to suspensions and detentions, they are going to miss crucial class time and then are going to feel behind, which is going to result in additional misconduct (Rodríguez, 2017). Many agencies like the American Bar Association have studied the school-to-prison pipeline and have concluded that zero-tolerance policies are counterproductive and do not create a healthier school climate (Nance, 2016). Instead of having zero-tolerance policies, schools can switch to mediation techniques and other reformative programs. Having these types of programs in place could get at the root cause of why children are acting up and help them avoid future altercations. Removing zero-tolerance policies could, however, be dangerous to teachers and other students because they include getting rid of security measures that can help keep children safe in the case of severe violence.

Replace officers with counselors.

Counselors are needed to provide more social support and mediation to all students, but especially the ones who need the extra help. These students need better trained teachers and administrators to help them cope with their issues rather than disciplinary actions that do not get at the root cause of their misbehavior (Nance, 2016). Even if schools are not able to replace the officers, then they could use better training, especially when dealing with children with disabilities (Nance, 2016). Establishing ground rules and job requirements of School Resource Officers (SROs) can help them know that their job is to make the students feel safe. Training them to not get involved in routine disciplinary matters could help them fulfill their initial purpose (Nance, 2016). One potential negative outcome from removing officers might be a reduction in safety for everyone in the school because most teachers are not trained in the same way officers are. This is where training in de-escalation techniques and other situations for teachers and other staff would be effective. The option of replacing officers with counselors is further explained in the recommended alternative.

Scale back strict security measures.

In a time where school shootings are increasingly common, people look to metal detectors, random searches, drug-sniffing dogs, and police searches to help diminish crime. It has been proven that these measures do the opposite (Nance, 2016). Matthew Mayer and Peter Leone conducted research on around 7,000 students and concluded that schools' use of metal detectors, security guards, and other strict security measures were actually associated with higher levels of school disorder, crime, and violence (Nance 2016). This also takes us back to Figure 4, which shows that having a more positive school atmosphere can make a whole world of a difference. Getting rid of strict security measures can give schools a healthier learning environment for children. Yet again removing strict security measures will put the children and staff of the school at risk for potential harm. In situations where a student brings in a knife, gun, or any other sort of weapon, the schools may not be equipped to handle these situations without metal detectors or school resource officers. This is where training and using a technique of talking with the student and calmly deescalating the situation will be more effective in the short and long run than turning a gun on the student. Limiting the use of law enforcement in regular day routine misbehaviors by students is what the goal is. Having school resource officers in the building is proven to do more harm than good, especially when they are put there to avoid situations that are very rare. In conclusion, preparing for a rare emergency has pushed countless students into the criminal justice system instead of helping them.

Recommended Alternative

For a problem that has a plethora of working parts, it is difficult to narrow it down to one alternative or solution. But, after research, the best option would be to replace school resource officers with counselors or social workers. Chongmin Na and Denise Gottfredon found that as schools increase their use of police or SROs, they have higher rates of crimes involving weapons and drugs. They also report a higher percentage of less serious violent crimes to law enforcement (2011). SROs have been added to schools without the decision being researched enough. Adding school resource officers, most importantly, takes away funding for hiring more counselors and the ability to implement programs like after-school programs and other programs that build character (Nance, 2016).

Having SROs additionally familiarizes the students with the justice system and makes petty crimes normal. Even if replacing the SROs was not an option, if they were given the proper training to deal with students like children and not criminals, this could make an important impact. Like everyone else, police officers have their own hidden biases that do affect the types of students they arrest. The main problem

with SROs is that, compared to school administrators and educators, they do not have advanced training in discipline, pedagogy, and child psychology (Nance, 2016). As explained in a case study by Wendy Haight, even the special education teacher did not know how to correctly handle a student with disabilities. How can a school resource officer be expected to do the same (2016)?

Social workers or other licensed support specialists are trained to adequately help students. SROs are specially trained to handle altercations and to punish children for misbehaving, even when it is a minor altercation. Having people on staff to work towards helping children and find the root cause of their misbehaviors so they can avoid them is huge. Yes, there are instances where having school resource officers would be beneficial. Some positives of having the presence of school resource officers include, quicker police call response times in case of emergencies, increased perceptions of safety, and fewer distractions from teachers and allowing them to focus on other students (Raymond, 2010). They are not doing what they were put in schools to do and are creating biased results, that is why they need to be replaced with professionals who are there to help the students.

Implementation of what seems like a completely new method of setting up schools is going to get a lot of backlash, especially in this current political climate. This change in schools could be seen and portrayed as radical, even though schools used to not have officers present. That is why it would be more beneficial to make small incremental changes at this time. This will benefit not only the school systems and the children, but the attitudes towards the policy. Having incremental changes will also be the best option because it is going to make updating and revising the policy so much easier than one big change. Getting people on board to change the way schools have been for a while is not going to be easy. But this policy change is one that is needed to start the healing process of both the criminal justice system and the school systems.

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Friday the 13th: How Superstitions, Luck, and Mood Influence Decision Making

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Abstract

A superstitious belief has the power to affect how people go about their everyday lives and how they even will go out of their way to protect or enhance their future. The purpose of this research was to examine the connection between superstitions, luck, and mood on a risky decision task. Although Friday the 13th, did not directly impact decision making (Study 1), mood states were found to be significantly lower on Friday the 13th relative to mood on Friday the 20th. Additionally, negative mood states significantly predicted safer decision-making on a risky decision-making task (Study 1 and 2). This finding suggests that Friday the 13th may have had an indirect impact on decision making. Individual differences in the perception of luck and superstition was also examined.

Keywords: Superstition, luck, mood

Friday the 13th: How Superstitions, Luck and Mood Influence Decision Making

People tend to be influenced by perceptions of luck depending on if it is good luck or bad luck. Some may adopt well known rituals (e.g., knocking on wood) or beliefs (e.g., Friday the 13th is unlucky), while others may develop their own personal rituals (e.g., personally lucky item). These superstitions are often used as methods