

Structural limitations and functional alternatives reducing suspensions and preserving racial suspension gaps

Jose Eos Trinidad
Department of Comparative Human Development
The University of Chicago

Although studies on school suspensions focus on the disproportionate number of Black students receiving them, policy changes reducing suspensions offer new insights into the racial gap. Using annual school-level data from the Chicago Public Schools (2012- 2016), I evaluate how a suspension reduction policy affected the number of students receiving suspensions, and the suspension gaps between majority Black schools and other schools. I find that the policy reduced overall suspensions but still preserved racial suspension gaps. I argue how structural limitations and functional alternatives played important roles in these consequences, and how this suggests the importance of contextual factors in assisting structural changes.

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