

A Critical-Quantitative Approach to Examine the Effects of Systemic Factors on Education Outcomes

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Abstract : Despite concerted efforts to improve education attainment with progress in recent years, student achievement and attainment remain among the most significant challenges for school districts across the United States. Many scholars have argued that students who do not complete high school do not drop out of school voluntarily but are 'pushed out' of schools through multiple mechanisms related to structural and socioeconomic barriers, behavioral health challenges, pedagogical practices, and administrative procedures. Extant literature has shown that living in historically disadvantaged neighborhoods or attending under-resourced schools exacerbates student-level risk factors for grade retention and school pushout. Most efforts to respond to the school pushout phenomenon have focused on individual characteristics of students, with relatively little attention to addressing these multiple system-level characteristics related to perpetuating inequities. This study is built on a growing body of social justice-oriented research concerned with the systemic influences that shape the experiences and mental health challenges of young people. Specifically, this study examined how young people who have been experiencing education inequities make meaning and navigate the structural factors related to neighborhood and school disinvestment and access to resources and supports, and their risk for school pushout. Furthermore, schools as political, cultural, and ideologically reproductive spaces often serve as sites of resistance and can support students who are impacted by educational inequity. Study findings provide education, neighborhood, school psychology, social work practice, and policy considerations.

Keywords : education policy, mental health, school prison nexus, school pushout, structural trauma

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